

Hizbollah fighter killed, another wounded

MARJAYOUN (AP) — Israeli troops killed one Hizbollah guerrilla and wounded another Wednesday in a clash in southern Lebanon, security officials said. The incident took place on the edge of Israel's self-styled "security zone," when Hizbollah guerrillas tried to infiltrate the enclave. Officials said rockets and machine-guns were fired. Wednesday's clash came two days after four Hizbollah guerrillas were killed as they stormed an outpost in southern Lebanon that was manned by an Israeli-backed militia. One Israeli soldier and four members of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia were wounded in Monday's fighting. Hizbollah leads a guerrilla war to try to oust Israel's 1,500 soldiers and the 2,500 SLA militiamen from the "security zone."

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King speaks comprehensively and candidly on all issues affecting Jordan's present and future.

Perhaps Jordan is the only country which has more employees than any other in relation to population

This country will always serve as solid wall on which our Palestinian brothers can lean

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein addressed members of the Arab Army Wednesday through a televised speech to senior officers of the Jordanian Armed Forces, at the King Hussein Medical Centre.

The King spoke candidly on the issues of national unity, the Palestinian question, the Kingdom's relations with Israel, the economy and many other issues of great importance.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and members of the Royal family attended.

Following are the words of His Majesty to the people:

Dear Brothers, In our talk today, I hope to address through you all personnel affiliated to the Jordanian Armed Forces, who enjoy my trust and constitute our hope and the shield that protects the country and its future aspirations and objectives. We have inherited objectives which we consider very dear and which remain alive in our hearts and con-

science. At this stage of our life, we have to protect this nation with resolve and determination and to defend its achievements and identity, hoping that this country will always serve as the solid wall on which our Palestinian brothers can lean in their struggle to regain their rights on their national soil.

This picture should be clear to all and we should place this objective before us. The subject is the rights of the Palestinians on their national soil.

At this stage of our life,

its essence and its values, thus creating an atmosphere of suspicion and imposing a dark view on everything. The decay continues through this entity and its foundations, aiming to drive this country towards loss.

This country is firm in the face of challenges and dangers. This country has offered a great deal. This country should not be exposed to anyone who tries to outbid it... or to outbid its sacrifices.

Let me give you some examples: The day before yesterday in particular, I

because they also intend to establish a satellite station.

I would like to say that I have always looked towards a new situation in which we can contribute to the establishment of an institution rising above all considerations of single Arab countries, including Jordan and to see this institution serving as a platform for responsible free expression.

Such institution should perform its duty and play its role. This institution might have other plans concerning radio and television. There is no doubt that we all wish

agreement, one of the well-known writers who was speaking for the other said, and I quote: "Yes sir, this is necessary because the situation does not give cause for satisfaction."

Yesterday and today I came across a physician and two engineers who asked me: Shall we convert our dinars to dollars or leave them as they are?"

Anybody who wants to convert dinars into dollars can do whatever he likes. In a country where up to JD12 million will be invested in one institution if everything is not well, I don't know

This country is not the 'substitute homeland' for Palestinians or others

in which we enjoy democracy and freedom and in which we, with God's help, protect the rights of the human being. I would like to repeat what I had mentioned many times before. My concern is over this march and over this democracy, and is my fear of the enemies of democracy to use it or abuse it. Those are who try to harm democracy,

received a group of Jordanian writers working for the press and for a new institution which they have established and through which they plan to publish a pan-Arab newspaper to serve all Arabs and present them free with opinion. They have informed me that they have been able to raise JD8 million so far and which could rise to JD12 million

our brothers success in the future. The meeting has remained on my mind since that day.

I was asked 'what are the topics on which we can talk', and I told them 'with God's will, this will take place very soon.' We will talk frankly and with clarity on all issues. This has always been our habit. As soon as we reached this

what can be a source of satisfaction and what are the criteria for determining that the situation does not give cause for satisfaction?

Thank God we are standing firm in our position and on our land. We have regained our lands and our water resources and the country enjoys credibility throughout the world. A country through which we



can serve our nation starting with the Palestinian brothers and the rest of Arabs.

Yes, we are confronting challenges and accumulated burdens. There are different problems which we have not been able to address in a correct manner

but we are armed with determination, faith and truth and we are proceeding forward. All these matters will be addressed correctly. We have made plans to make this come true.

As for the Jordanian Armed Forces, they are a source of pride to the coun-

try. The Arab Army's motto serves as a symbol for many principles, not only affiliation, but also honour, discipline, awareness, loyalty, bravery and originality.

We are pursuing efforts to

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Israeli Labour votes pro Palestinian state

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's opposition Labour Party for the first time endorsed the Palestinians' right to self-determination on Wednesday, reflecting growing support among Israelis for a Palestinian state.

In an overwhelming majority, the party voted to add to the party platform a provision saying Labour does not rule out a Palestinian state with limited military powers.

Only a handful of Labour members voted against the provision, which took the party one step further than last year's decision to drop its opposition to a Palestinian state.

Last month, a poll conducted by the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv showed that about half of all Israelis support the

establishment of a Palestinian state, the highest percentage ever.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party opposes establishment of a Palestinian state, although Mr. Netanyahu has hinted he might accept some form of limited Palestinian statehood as part of a final peace settlement to be reached by 1999.

The provision endorsed by the Labour Party recognised "the Palestinian right to self-determination and did not rule out the establishment of a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty."

Such a state could not maintain an army or form a military or strategic pact with a third country, and its air space would remain open to the Israeli air force, a Labour official said.

Israeli, Palestinians to meet

RAMALLAH (AP) — U.S. Envoy Dennis Ross met Wednesday with senior Palestinian negotiator Sa'ab Erekat, preparing for the first meeting of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators since a sharp deterioration in relations two months ago.

"We hope every possible effort will be exerted to save the peace process," Mr. Erekat said. "We hope that we can have a settlement freeze and a precise implementation of the agreement."

Israeli-Palestinian talks broke off in March after Israel broke ground for a Jewish settlement in Jerusalem on land occupied from the Arabs in 1967, followed by weeks of clashes in the West Bank between Palestinian youths and Israeli troops.

The Palestinians have

said they would only return to the talks once Israel stops construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza strip and Jerusalem, something Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government refuses to do.

Israel, meanwhile, insists the Palestinians resume security coordination before the peace process can move forward. The U.S. has pushed the two sides to resume talks and air their grievances face-to-face.

Wednesday night's meeting is to be held at the residence of U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk, in the presence of U.S. envoy Dennis Ross.

Mr. Erekat, Palestinian Minister Nabil Shaath, and Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai are expected to attend. "There is a need to sit together and

solve the problems," Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy told reporters Wednesday before leaving on an official trip to Washington.

"Every little problem can't become an international issue or an Alibi for stopping negotiations," Mr. Levy insisted that Israel's settlement building was not a violation of the Israel-Palestinian accords.

"We are acting according to the mandate given to us, a mandate to go forward with an acceleration of settlement activity," he said. "It may be against some people's desires and expectations, but it does not go against the agreements."

Mr. Levy reiterated the government's promise to build for Palestinians as well as Jews in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as capital of a

future state.

U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk told Associated Press (AP) television on Wednesday that the U.S. was doing its best to get both sides to rebuild confidence. High on the agenda was settlement activity, building in Jerusalem, and security coordination, he said.

"But in the end, they're the ones who have the conflict," he said. "They're the ones who have to make peace."

Asked about criticism from some Palestinians that the U.S. is losing its impartiality, Mr. Indyk bristled. "If they don't want us to mediate, then fine, that's fine, we'll leave them to fight it out," he said. "We're ready to do our part if they're ready to do their part. They shouldn't be criticising the us for trying to help the process."

Israel's foreign minister to visit Washington

WASHINGTON (R) — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy will visit Washington at the end of the week for talks with U.S. officials, the State Department said on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Levy will be here, I believe on Friday," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told a regular briefing. The trip follows efforts in Israel by U.S. mediator Dennis Ross to revive Palestinian-Israeli talks after a two-month crisis.

Negotiations have been largely stalled since Israel started a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem on March 18 and a militant bomber killed himself and three Israeli women at a Tel Aviv cafe three days later.

Mr. Ross, President Bill Clinton's special Middle East envoy, met Mr. Levy, Israeli Defence Minister

Yitzhak Mordechai and Finance Minister Dan Meridor on Tuesday as he sought to arrange a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian National Authority (PNA) officials.

Mr. Burns said Mr. Ross would return to Washington "in the next couple of days."

Reports from Israel last month said Mr. Levy had been invited to Washington for talks with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on May 2, but they were later dismissed by the State Department as a misunderstanding.

In a related matter, Mr. Burns said the murder of a 70-year-old Palestinian man occurred under "very suspicious circumstances."

But he said the United States had few details about the case and continued to adopt a measured approach toward what has become a

controversial issue. Farid Bashit was found dead in PNA-ruled Ramallah in the West Bank on Friday amid accusations he sold land to Jews.

Security sources said he was discovered bound and showed signs of a blow to the head by a sharp object. Israel was investigating the death after Palestinian security forces handed over the body.

The killing took place after the PNA said last week it would apply the death sentence to Palestinians who sold land to Jews.

On this point Mr. Burns said: "We think that everything must be done in terms of what people say and people do to create a climate of peace in that part of the world — in Jerusalem, in the West Bank and Gaza and throughout Israel — a climate of peace where people are free to pursue

their own affairs within the law, as the law is currently constituted."

"That applies to business people and it applies to politicians as well," he said.

He said the United States would be "highly disturbed if it turned out that any officials had anything to do with the murder of the official in Ramallah" but stressed that "that has not been proven, it has not been indicated, and the police are investigating this particular crime."

Asked if Washington was disturbed that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat had not disavowed the PNA's statement, Mr. Burns said he was unaware of what Mr. Arafat or his aides may have said on the issue. Mr. Burns also said he did not know if Mr. Ross had raised the issue in his talks with Mr. Arafat.

Palestinians protest 'mini western wall'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — In the latest wrangle over the Holy City of Jerusalem, Palestinians objected Tuesday to what they termed an Israeli effort to create a new prayer area at a previously unused part of the Western Wall, the holiest site for Jews.

Israel admits that as part of a renovation of the entire western wall area, it plans a new prayer site at an exposed part of the wall in an Arab neighbourhood some 200 metres from the plaza where the current Western Wall stands.

But Palestinian ire appears to have been awakened only Tuesday, when Arab residents reported seeing the first Jewish visitors praying at what was dubbed the "mini western

wall." Sheikh Abdul Naim Salhab, head of the Islamist Trust or Waqf which controls Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, said the Palestinians would resist the plans.

"Jews have no right to set up (another) Jewish prayer place in the heart of an Islamic quarter," he said.

The Western Wall, the last remnant of the Jewish temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., abuts a raised area known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Haram Al Sharif — whose Al Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam.

Muslims and Jews watch closely for any changes in the area. Its disruptive

Turkish army on military offensive in northern Iraq

ZAKHO (R) — Several thousand Turkish troops, backed by tanks and heavy artillery, pushed across the border into northern Iraq early Wednesday in an apparent move against separatist Kurdish rebel bases, witnesses said.

The assault, which began at 3 a.m. (23:00 GMT) followed a security sweep by local Iraqi Kurdish authorities, who ordered all journalists to leave the border region and confiscated mobile telephones capable of reaching Turkey.

Three thousand troops, including tanks and artillery, started crossing at 23:00 GMT and they are still continuing, a resident close to the border said. Witnesses said there were no immediate signs of any clashes.

Turkish army officers inside Iraq were right-lipped, with one saying only: "We are here on exercises."

Residents on the Turkish side said the border crossing at Habur was closed to all civilian traffic.

"There is a news blackout. No member of the press is

permitted access to Zakho," a local Iraqi Kurdish official said.

Authorities confiscated the film of a Western photographer who provides pictures to Western news agencies, before ordering him out of the area.

The Iraqi side of the border is under the general control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which maintains loose ties to Turkish authorities.

Occasionally the two cooperate against Turkey's separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), which uses the border marches to launch attacks against Turkish targets.

Turkish troops regularly cross back and forth in "hot pursuit" of the PKK. In March of 1995, however, tens of thousands of troops pushed deep into Iraqi territory for a prolonged campaign.

A KDP representative in the southeastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir said Turkish jets flew bombing missions from a base in the city.

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THE FACE OF THE FUTURE
MEC Middle East Company

King speaks comprehensively

(Continued from page 1)

secure all the needs of the armed forces in the coming stages. We believe that the basic steps should focus on the development of the human being. Thank God, our men in the Armed Forces are qualified, trained and capable of dealing with various developments.

There are projects for the improvement and acquisition of military requirements which we hope will be achieved so that the weapons will be entrusted to the honest and trustworthy hands of those who can protect them and who can contribute also towards serving and building the country.

In this respect, discussions lately concentrated on the subject of military industrialisation and we have entrusted a committee chaired by my brother Crown Prince Hassan to follow up on this matter since we possess the potentials and capabilities at our workshops.

We have good qualifications and capabilities in the Jordanian Royal Air Force and the Armed Forces and we plan to utilise these potentials, and with God's help, we will enter this field with efficiency and competence to achieve the best results.

One of our problems is the armours which we hope to replace ... to modify. This is on our mind. Our Armed Forces are able to deal with any situation in the region and in the world. In fact, our Armed Forces contributed in peacekeeping efforts which reflected very positively on this country and the Armed Forces. Everybody is praising and appreciating the unique status of the Jordanian Armed Forces due to their good performance. The positive aspects far outweigh the negative aspects.

As to the economic situation, we have plans and we are making contacts throughout the world, exerting all our efforts and capabilities.

There is an issue on which we must focus and that is the existence of a group of people, either due to their political parties' affiliation or other reasons, in the state body, are serving as an obstacle in the way of progress.

They are resisting modernisation and innovation. They are doing everything possible to obstruct our efforts aimed at encouraging investors to come to this country so that we can achieve progress. This requires from all of us and the government to be aware of this situation and address it. And this is what we are doing.

In one of my discussions with the prime minister in regard to the living conditions in Jordan in general and the Armed Forces in particular, I pointed out

that every summer we reexamine the question of salaries and every year we address the cost of living so that we can ensure our citizens a comfortable life. Although we face difficulties, we have adopted this policy of addressing the situation in order to guarantee a solution. With God's will, we are going to address this issue very soon and we will also address the issue of the retired servicemen. There is a draft law under study at the Prime Ministry and we hope it will be finalised soon.

As to the inefficiency in the public administration, we all recall the repeated shocks of 1948, 1967 and 1990. Perhaps Jordan is the only country that has more employees than any other in relation to the number of population.

Let us go back to the overcrowdedness and the performance. Perhaps this performance is not up to our aspirations.

Let us also refer to the question of youth. The young people who graduate from universities and who are able to play a role.

These are all standing problems but we also hear rumours and tales of harm to be done to a great number of citizens. This is out of the question. We intend to come up with a comprehensive study about this situation.

I have said before that even those employees who have no place or work can stay at home and receive their salaries in full until other positions have been found for them. We do not want to deprive any one of his livelihood nor have we ever been aiming to do that. However, we must improve our performance otherwise we will not progress. We must realise that the population is growing and we have to create chances for people to lead a decent life, by working in all fields ... in agriculture or industry.

We must concentrate on training and education in order to qualify people for the future.

As for the general elections, it is a subject that we consider a part of democracy and a part of our life.

We find some people in the media, who are not affiliated to this country, who are claiming in advance that the general elections will be rigged.

Democracy in this country did not come as a result of these persons' revolution but it came as a result of our desire to enable our citizens to shoulder responsibility for their country. There is no need to rig the elections. The door is open for anyone to compete and to run.

There has been talk about mixing between the legislative and executive authorities, and in my view, perhaps in the future, we will have an executive

authority acting independently from the legislative so that the government can perform its duty and so that the deputies can monitor such performance and direct the government in the best national interest.

This will be better than considering the individual interest as the criteria which will further aggravate the inefficiency in the public administration.

There are some people who ask why these elections are not based on representation per population.

There are areas in Jordan, which for a long time, have been deprived of securing their basic needs, and therefore, the proportion and representation agreed upon for each district are enough to make us hear their voices in all parts of the country, so that we can meet their needs in a suitable manner.

As for the Palestine question, it is the focus of our attention. We, in this country, constitute a united family and its members have the same rights and duties but there is a thin line which we must take into consideration.

Let us talk about the multilateral phase of the peace negotiations which is being opposed by some in the Arab World. I don't know why. These negotiations aim at concentrating on certain subjects including the question of water as well as the refugees. The refugees have a sacred right to repatriation or compensation. Are we here to move towards a position where it is said that we have no problem? Or should we consider Jordanians of Palestinian origin as possessing no right to repatriation or compensation?

This is the line of balance on which we are concentrating one way or another. All people should enjoy the right of election, but without reaching the stage where people are talking about Palestinian rights as the Palestinians assume full Jordanian citizenship. This is on the one hand and on the other, the brothers in the Palestine National Authority are these days making arrangements and preparing the ground for the creation of a ministry to handle the affairs of Palestinians in the diaspora. This subject has not yet been discussed with us. We have not discussed it but we heard about it. Does this concern the Palestinians in this country as well as those in other parts of the world? Why should we be concerned about these issues? We are concerned because on the one hand we want to clarify the picture so that no one can understand these matters incorrectly.

This is a country for the Muhajereen and Ansar (exiles and hosts). All its citizens enjoy equal rights and duties. Anyone who dares tamper with national unity is my adversary to the day of doom. And I mean what I say. But there is also the Palestinian dimension as to the right of repatriation or compensation or their right to choose loyalty to the Palestinian entity, which I hope will be established on Palestinian soil.

I will be pleased to see the Palestinians regain their right to their national soil. Until this position has been clarified, we must not confuse matters. We reject all attempts which aim to shake us in any way or manner, be it in the economic field, in the question of administrative reforms, or in the question of elections or manipulations of results because our basic duty is to remain a solid wall on which the Palestinians can lean as they struggle for their rights on their national soil. Otherwise the Palestinians can by no means attain their aspired rights.

This country is not the 'substitute homeland' for the Palestinians or others. The Palestinian question, including negotiations of peace, is being handled by the concerned party with backing from Arab countries, from us and also from the world at large. We are here to give help and support in the best manner we can and whenever we are called upon. I must reiterate at all times that under all circumstances, we will by no means allow any tampering with our national unity. We are confined to certain limits pending final clarification of the situation.

Concerning the Palestinian rights to repatriation or compensation, we do not intend to act in a manner that would threaten Jordan and Palestine or the Palestinian right or to place the Palestinians in a difficult position as to determining their right to repatriation or compensation. With God's providence, we are determined to overcome the present difficult stage.

The peace process is faltering now and then, and if we want to be realistic, many of the aspirations and assurances which we had felt at the start of the process do not exist now at the same level.

In fact, there is a minority on each side that has been able to impose its own agenda resulting in suspicion as the norm rather than confidence and reassurance. The apprehensions have increased. But let us be clear on all matters. What is the alternative to peace except war and destruction? Can anyone tell me where I can find the alternative? Of course, by peace, I do not mean capitulation. We must defend our rights and those of our brothers to a decent life.

We are seeking a period of stability and calm during which we prepare our

children for a climate that is free of chaos. We must bridge the gap between us and the others so that we might not be afraid of the future.

In our media, we continually read articles that speak of hatred and anger. Although this reflects reality, we should not overlook the human dimension.

Let me be frank more than any other time before. I refer to what disasters befell (that nation), not necessarily in this part of the world, but in the world at large ... that nation's historic sufferings which they had undergone, despite the military power they possess today. These people have their own fears which I believe are justified if we consider what had been said in the Arab world in the past years.

Unfortunately, words are far from deeds and they are designed for propaganda purposes and for the media. However, these words tend to poison the atmosphere and had led us to the situation in which we are today.

If we want to regain our rights, we must reassure this neighbour that we are not murderers or criminals. Neither are we desired to commit murder or carry out destruction. If they are afraid, we have the same apprehensions and we have justification for our fears. Therefore we have to behave in a manner that reflects confidence.

Let us build bridges or remove the walls that had kept us away from the faces of the people on the other side. When the people on the other side learn the facts about us, fears and doubts will vanish, and then, there will be an opportunity for the building process, for establishing rights and for justice. This question could be so simple.

In this atmosphere, we witnessed an incident that offended each of us: and offended the Jordanian Armed Forces because it was alien to the morals, traditions and disciplines with which the armed forces have been characterised.

The case is in court now and soon we will witness what the judiciary ruling will be. The trial was preceded by a complete investigation. As I learnt of the incident while I was on my way to the U.S., I decided to return back because I was unable to face the world or to pursue the mission I had embarked on. I also had to return to see what I can do on the humanitarian level because without human feelings we cannot deal with one another.

On my way back, and as those who were in responsible positions recall, I was reassured that the man was arrested and investigations were underway. At the same time I inquired about his family and passed directives for due care to be given to them. This is

our duty and responsibility. Upon my return, at the airport, I inquired again about the man's family because it is our way of dealing with others, and it is my duty to do.

People talk about normalisation. But I, for one, realise the truth about myself and my rights and I fear no other person in the world. I defend my beliefs and stand by them while there is no other alternative to dialogue. And so I decided to go and offer condolences. Anyone who saw what I had seen will be pained over the suffering of the people, regardless of who they are.

These people had a tradition of sitting on the floor when receiving condolences. So what if I sat on the floor? This tradition reminds us of our traditions. I had met a whole family who are mute. The only daughter of 14 years who was their only link with the world, was among the victims of the attack. Do you want me not to feel bad at this? Today in our local press we read a dastard crime, a father who killed his wife and children and only one girl escaped death. The picture is the same.

We have read tales in the papers claiming that King Hussein has donated \$300,000 for each of the families of the victims. This did not happen, but had it happened, I don't see why not. I wish I could afford these sums which I would distribute to my countrymen.

I have heard a leader of a sister Arab country saying: "Why did he not do that for Qana?" We have done more than others for Qana at the personal and national levels but this had been forgotten.

It has been asked: "Why, your daughter Princess Aisha, was sent to study in Israel? But when did we send her to study in Israel as some papers have claimed?" Princess Aisha studied in military academies in Britain and the USA and she is now in charge of the women members of the Armed Forces. The allegations were intended to poison the atmosphere and create confusion.

There are some who claimed that Jordan has no democracy but had that been the case, none of them would have been able to raise his voice. How can we reconcile this claim with the realities on the ground? In fact, this is an expression of ingratitude.

I believe our press should deal with this situation because we have reached a point of deterioration, even at the level of morals.

People in the Arab world have been saying that they cannot send their children to Jordan which has this bad (image). The press is not reflecting the correct image about the country which we know. This distortion should stop.

Reports in the press say that some of my people live in caves, what can I do about that? I wish everyone in need would share my residence. As to the infrastructure of the refugee camps, we face the hue and cry by some people. We wanted to meet the camps residents' needs and improve their conditions.

Jordan has always served as the vanguard when solving problems and crisis that had befallen the Arab World. Amman was always the meeting place of people for affection and reconciliation. I wonder why the behaviour of ingratitude on the part of some people. Why the acts of sabotage. Amman will always be a place for agreement and accord at the Arab level and Jordan will be always spearheading efforts for doing good for others.

As for the Badia force, we hope they will be up to the level of expectations because we have been witnessing a rise in the number of crimes and smuggling. Let us give due attention to this question. Let us all be vigilant. I hope in the near future I will make a tour of all units of the Jordanian Armed Forces wherever they are in the world. I hope to make visits to the fields where we can do more than we talk.

I wish my words will reach the hearts and the conscience of every one of you in the armed forces. Please excuse me, at the age of sixty-two, and having faced a hard life. I don't have the same strength as before. But my heart is full of love and affection and I am fully committed to serving my nation until the last breath of my life.

Turkish army on military

(Continued from page 1)

"Turkish planes have been bombing PKK camps in northern Iraq," Hacı Salih Huseyin, Diyarbakir representative of the KDP, told reporters. "They bombed the Zab camp and Hakkur."

Turkish jets have recently stepped up routine cross-border bombings into northern Iraq, according to reports from the region.

Iraq strongly condemned the latest incursion by Turkish armed forces into its north and demanded an immediate withdrawal of the "invading troops," the official Iraqi news agency

(INA) said on Wednesday. "The government of the republic of Iraq vehemently condemns this Turkish military aggression on the sovereignty of Iraq and its territorial integrity," INA said, quoting a foreign ministry spokesman.

The spokesman said the government "calls on the Turkish government to withdraw its invading troops from inside Iraqi territory immediately and halt the repetition of such practices which contravene the U.N. Charter, principles of international law and good neighbourly ties."

Palestinians protest...

(Continued from page 1)

potential was demonstrated in September when Israel opened a new exit to an archaeological tunnel along the Western Wall, sparking Palestinian riots in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and 79 people were killed in three days of gun battles.

Palestinians said Jews visiting the new site Tuesday — even before renovations there have begun — deposited prayer notes in the cracks between the large stones, as is traditional at the Western Wall.

"I saw dozens of papers ... which include names of worshippers and prayers for success in life. We have kept the papers in place to show evidence of the Israeli plans," said Raed Salah, mayor of the Israeli-Arab town of Umm Al Fahm who visited the site.

Israeli reports have said planned renovations to the Western Wall area would cost \$4.4 million and include a visitor centre, parking lots and shaded areas.

Shimon Malka, a

spokesman for Israel's religious affairs ministry, said last week that the government is looking into setting up a prayer area beyond the existing plaza as well. He said the motives were religious, not political.

Israeli reports have suggested the area might be used as a prayer section for women wanting to visit the wall. According to orthodox Jewish custom men and women are segregated during prayer.

Media reports said the alley leading up to the new section was too narrow to enable it to become a major attraction.

Still, Palestinians fear any such new project will deepen Israel's hold on the eastern sector of the city; they want the area, which Israel seized in 1967, for the capital of their hoped-for state.

"Al Aqsa Mosque, its walls, and its adjacent buildings are red lines," Mr. Salah said. "Any act of aggression on the mosque will provoke violence and unpredictable tragedies."

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15:35Cartoon
16:00Curiosity show
16:30They Came From Outer Space
16:50American Basketball
17:25Cat of This World
18:00French Programme
19:30News Headlines
19:35Parenthood
20:00Cinema, Cinema
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10Kung Fu
22:00News in English
22:35 Feature Film — "Joe Versus the Volcano"
23:50Tarzuta

PRAYER TIMES

04:05Fajr
05:34(Sunrise) Duha
12:32Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:30Maghreb
20:58Isha

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The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Hot, dry, and dusty weather conditions will continue during the weekend with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will

be hot and dusty, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

Mini/Max. Temperatures

Amman20/33

Aqaba25/38

Deserts17/37

Jordan Valley24/38

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 33, Aqaba, 37 Humidity readings: Amman 21 per cent.

Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Khalil Al Tushaq757253

Dr. Bahjat Bader832642

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim820342

Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi893542

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdows pharmacy778336

Al Asena pharmacy637055

Nairoukh pharmacy623672

Al Salam pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy637660

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu281484

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Nabhan995743

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111

Civil Defence Department661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Department630321

Hotel Complaints605800

Price Complaints661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority680100

Jordan Electricity Authority815615

Electric Power Company636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre813813/32

Khalidi Maternity644281/6

Aklleh Maternity642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital669131

University Hospital845845

Al-Mnasher Hospital667271/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3

Al-Bashir775111/26

Army, Marka891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital602240/50

Amal Hospital674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)347100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:15Sanaa (RJ)

08:30Muscat (RJ)

10:10Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

10:30Bonnay (RJ)

11:05Beirut (RJ)

11:30Colombo (RJ)

11:45 Calcutta, Dubai (add) (RJ)

12:30New Delhi (RJ)

15:40 New York, Amsterdam (add) (RJ)

17:10Moscow (RJ)

Queen opens conference of Jordan Paediatric Society...

AMMAN (J.T.) — The sixth conference of the Jordan Paediatric Society (JPS), organised in association with the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), was Wednesday inaugurated by Her Majesty Queen Noor at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

The Queen, who opened the conference's medical exhibition, distributed plaques to ten distinguished senior paediatricians, a Royal Court statement said. She stressed the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to children's welfare which would integrate physical health with children's psycho-social and developmental needs.

More focus should be placed on preventive measures such as breastfeeding, which provides the best nutrition to protect infants against infection and diseases, as well as child health care training for parents and implementing developmental screening programmes in maternal and child health centres all over the country, the Queen emphasised.

Director of the University of Jordan's Paediatrics Department and Conference President Dr. Abdul Karim Qudus described the three-day conference, including doctors from the Arab World, the United States, England and France, as covering "maternal and child health care, nutrition, national vaccine programmes, breastfeeding, paediatric diseases endemic to the country and the region as well as technological advances such as telemedicine and Internet for doctors."

Minister of Social Development and Acting Minister



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday opens the sixth conference of the Jordan Paediatric Society (JPS) where she stressed the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to children's welfare which would integrate physical health with children's psycho-social and developmental needs (Petra photo)

of Health and Medical Care Mohammad Mamsar stated that Jordan launched its first maternal and child health programme in 1955 in Amman, which, he said, has now expanded to 287 centres located throughout the Kingdom and that the number of paediatricians increased from 31 doctors in 1970 to over 400 doctors.

According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Area Representative Dorrit Alopaeus Stahl, the Paediatric Society's conferences have not "only targeted the latest medical developments in medicine and paediatrics in general, but have also focused on other critical issues such as child abuse and the related role of paediatricians," the statement said.

She added that UNICEF has "always relied on the

support and partnership of the paediatricians and JPS, particularly in the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative as well as the establishment of innovative programmes for early detection of child disabilities, pre-service training, management information systems and healthy life skills."

The Jordan Paediatric Society was established in 1962 as the Jordan Medical Association's first specialised society and currently has more than 300 members, the statement said.

Jordan joined UNICEF's "Child Survival Revolution" in 1980, achieving Universal Child Immunisation (90 per cent immunisation against the 6 killer diseases) in 1987, three years before the targeted date of 1990, according to the statement.

Subsequent to the 1990 World Summit on Children, Jordan continued its work on achieving the mid-decade goals related to universal immunisation coverage, oral rehydration therapy, provision of primary education for all, universal salt iodisation and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were all reached by 1995.

The Queen, accompanied by her advisor In'am Mufit, was received by President of the Jordan Medical Association Dr. Basem Dajani, President of Jordan University of Science and Technology Dr. Saad Hijazi, Chairman of the Conference's Scientific Committee Dr. Mohammad Rawashdeh and Coordinator of the National Task Force for Children Hayat Yaghi.

Child survivor of quintuple shooting expected to be released from hospital today

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Karak Government Hospital officials Wednesday affirmed that four-year old Rasha Awad, admitted to the hospital on Tuesday suffering from two gunshot wounds to the head and neck, is expected to be released from the hospital today.

Rasha is one of two children who survived a quintuple shooting in her house in Karak at approximately midnight on Monday in which her 40-year-old father, Awad Mohammad, reportedly killed her 35-year old mother and four siblings.

"Luckily, Rasha's wounds were all external which facilitated her quick recovery," the hospital's attending doctor told the Jordan Times Wednesday.

Rasha's sister Nermeen, eight, escaped the shooting incident with no injuries as she hid in her bedroom closet when the incident occurred.

Mr. Mohammad, who turned himself in to authorities shortly after the shooting, claimed that he killed his wife and children to "cleanse his family's honour."

Meanwhile, four people, including two children, were killed in four separate incidents, according to police and Civil Defence Department (CDD) reports. In Madaba, a three-year-old child was killed when a parked car rolled back, killing him instantly, according to police reports.

The report said that the owner of the vehicle which hit the child, Dakhilah Odeh, 31, had parked his car and went to visit his

friend when a passer-by informed him that his car had moved from its original location.

Upon checking the matter, the reports said, Mr. Odeh found two children playing inside his car and the child, Mazen Birges, underneath.

Traffic officials blamed Mr. Odeh for the incident stating that he failed to follow necessary safety procedures when he parked his vehicle.

An eight-year old child drowned in a well in the Liwa Qasser area in Karak on Wednesday. CDD reports related.

A CDD official told the Jordan Times that the child, Hammad Mohammad, accidentally fell in the well while taking a walk.

"The two-metre deep water well was old and covered with soil and plants,

and the child apparently did not see it and fell inside.

In another drowning incident on Wednesday, an 18-year old man drowned also in a neglected well in the Wadi Mousa area of Ma'an, the official said.

According to the official, Ayman Mohammad Amarin, a shepherd, was attempting to get some water from the well when "he accidentally fell there-in."

In Jabal Zohour in Amman, a 17-year-old youth was killed when the rental car in which he was a passenger struck a light pole, reports said.

The report identified the deceased as Ayman Ali. The driver of the vehicle, Ahmad Mohammad, 25, was also injured in the accident and listed in critical condition.

Bahraini official relays message to premier

AMMAN (Petra) — Bahraini Minister of Communications Sheikh Ali Ben Khalifeh Ben Salman Al Khalifeh Wednesday conveyed a message to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali from his Bahraini counterpart Sheikh Khalifeh Ben Salman Al Khalifeh regarding bilateral ties and cooperation.

Following the meeting, Sheikh Khalifeh affirmed that he and Dr. Majali discussed a number of topics including a Bahraini industrial fair to be organised in Amman.

The fair reflects the strong ties between the two countries and will further strengthen trade and economic cooperation between them, he added.

Sheikh Khalifeh will today represent his country at the 24th meeting of the General Assembly of the Arab Satellite Communication Organisation, known as ARABSAT, and attended by delegates from various parts of the Arab World.

On his arrival in Amman,



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Wednesday confers with Bahraini Minister of Communications Sheikh Ali Ben Khalifeh (Petra photo)

Sheikh Khalifeh was welcomed by HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein and Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Bassam Saket.

Ministers from Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates have also arrived to participate in the ARABSAT meeting.

Upon his arrival, Kuwaiti Minister of Communications Jaseem Al Awn described his country as eager to promote ties with the Kingdom.

...and meets with Canadian official

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday met with the director of the Montreal Consortium for Human Rights Training (MCHRAIT) Professor Jim Toroznyer to discuss the establishment of the country's first school of social work at the University of Jordan, a Royal Court statement said.

The first phase of the programme, to be funded by a grant from the Canadian

International Development Agency, will begin next fall by sending two Jordanian academics to McGill University to study Canadian social work education and determine what is most applicable to Jordan.

According to Professor Toroznyer, in 1994 MCHRAIT began working with the University of Jordan, the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to identify

possible collaborative projects which could contribute regionally to the reduction of inequality and the promotion of peace, the statement said.

MCHRAIT, which is based at McGill University in Canada, promotes partnerships between academic institutions, organisations and individuals in the fields of social development and human rights advocacy. It seeks to advance col-

laboration in the Middle East by providing fellowships to pursue specialised programmes of study at McGill to develop expertise and promote leadership in the aforementioned fields, according to the statement.

Attending the meeting with the Queen were the Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Molloy, Vice-President of the University of Jordan Dr. Sami Khasawneh and Ms. Toroznyer.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

"Brigada central" (pts 10,11) at the Cervantes Institute, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
"When Harry Met Sally" at the American Centre, Abdoon on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
"Matisee — Voyages" (with commentary in Arabic by Adnan Al Sharif) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

SEMINAR

"The Western Policy Towards the Middle East in the Twenty First Century" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 2:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

"Spring exhibition '97 entitled 'Spring is Blooming' at the Jordan River Designs" (Tel. 612061/2), until May 31.
"Works by Omar Shahwan at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthman (Tel. 5526932), until May 29.
"Works by Issam Tawani at Alta Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until May 29.
"The Water of Deserts" at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 22.
"Display of caricature drawings by Imad Hajjaj at Balqa Art Gallery, Puhels, until May 25.
"Exhibition of Italian products at the Amman International Motor Show, Maj Al Hamam, until May 18.
"Photo exhibition entitled 'Fragments' by Wa'el Al Masri at The Gallery, Hotel Intercontinental, Jabal Amman until May 22.
"Display of paintings, sculptures, mosaic, ceramics works, jewelry and food products of Dana Valley at the Embassy of Pakistan, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 23.
"Exhibition of home furnishings collection by the Salt Handicraft Centre at Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation (Tel. 699141/2), until May 15.
"Works by Paris-based Moroccan artist Najia Mahadiji, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 12. Also showing an exhibition by architectural photographer Said Nuseibah entitled 'The Farthest Mosque' and by contemporary Arab artists.
"Fifth Book Exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabal Amman, until May 15.
"Recent drawings and sculptures by Mona Sandi entitled 'Petra Tablets' at her residence in Abdoon (Tel. 829700), until May 15.
"Works by contemporary painters from the Arab World at Balqa Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until May 15.
"Works by Iraqi artist Nuri Al Rawi entitled 'Departure of Immigrants from the World' at Hamourabi Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 15.
"Rani Hamida spring exhibition entitled 'Crossing Borders' (displaying rugs, cushions, runners, and wall hangings) at the Jordan Contractors Association's Building, Deir Al Ghubayr (Tel. 608696), until May 18.

Man charged with abduction of girls

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police Wednesday transferred the case of a 47-year old man to the criminal prosecutor on charges of molesting two six-year-old children in Marka last month, judicial sources said.

According to the sources, the suspect, Qassem Abdul Fatah, an aviation maintenance worker, confessed last week to molesting the two children, describing his action as the "devil's whim."

Sources said that the suspect used to monitor the children in the Abdullat neighbourhood and, on April 24, he convinced two children, who had been playing in a public park, to enter his car and took them to an empty apartment which apparently belonged to his brother.

"The suspect undressed both girls and molested them while they screamed and begged him not to hurt them," the source said.

He added that the two girls managed to escape from an open window

from the first floor apartment after which the authorities were informed.

One of the two children last week informed Criminal Prosecutor Imad Kilani that the suspect offered them candy and money if they rode with him in his car.

According to judicial sources, the man is expected to be charged with criminal abduction.

Meanwhile, police Wednesday announced the arrest of a 30-year-old man, who, authorities said, is responsible for more than 30 armed robberies, embezzlements and thefts in Amman.

Police officials identified the suspect as Yousef Hamdan, who they said was apprehended late Tuesday night in the Tla'a Al Ali area.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Wednesday evening said they were questioning the suspect.

Ministry clamps down on document forgeries

Zeina Durra
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Ministry of Education has clamped down on students entering the educational and professional arenas with forged foreign credentials.

The issue surfaced when, for reasons of efficiency, the ministry's examination department split the validation and legalisation division of education certificates into two areas. This resulted in one section in which high school and other academic credentials were certified and a second equivalency section where foreign education certificates were evaluated in relation to Jordanian ones.

"This more efficient system alerted us to persuasive counterfeit documents, used by both foreigners and Jordanians, which might have been previously overlooked," Director General of Examinations at the Ministry of Education Ahmed Salem Al Ali said.

Previously, counterfeit certificates did not pose such a problem, but "improved technology means that forgeries are more convincing," he affirmed. "Before, the [falsified documents] stood out immediately [as] amateur jobs but now [the forgeries are] very professional."

The combination of political upheavals and modern technologies appears to have led to the rise of forgeries.

"The unstable circumstances arising from certain situations, for example the Gulf War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, meant there was an increase in this type of [incident]," Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Education Dr. Zoughan Obeidat said.

"On Oct. 26 of last year, the legalisation and certification section took general protective measures to deal with the problem," he explained. "However, despite the increase [in

this type of incident] the number of [offenders] remains minimal," he said.

The new system appears to be more thorough, "the division now [makes an enquiry into] every high school education certificate which is in the process of being legalised and certified," Mr. Al Ali maintained.

The forged high school certificates are, for the most part, used to enter universities. Counterfeit degrees have also been discovered, he added.

As the process of validation is time-consuming, students are allowed to enter a given university before the check has been completed, but if they are found to be using a forged certificate, they are immediately expelled and duly prosecuted, he maintained.

A committee consisting of members of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has been created to investigate the certificates of persons already attending universities in Jordan. "[As of now] no one will be able to graduate [who previously made use of a] forged certificate," Mr. Salem Al Ali affirmed.

"They may escape for a month or a year but we will root them out," Dr. Obeidat declared.

The division also deals with those persons who attempt to procure employment using counterfeit documents, "[Upon discovery], the Ministry of Labour will be informed," Mr. Salem Al Ali maintained. "[The names of these persons] will be put on file and all governmental organisations will have access to this information, thereby stunting any career opportunities."

"The situation is now under control," Mr. Salem Al Ali stated. "Cheating will never end. It has always been present and will always be, but now we have a more effective way of dealing with it," Dr. Obeidat concluded.

Workshop attempts to stem incidents of 'festive fire'

AMMAN (Petra) — So-called festive fire gunshots traditionally fired to celebrate weddings or other events — was last year responsible for the deaths of six persons and the injuries of 421 others, Major General Mohammad Basoul from the Public Security Department (PSD) said Wednesday.

This was compared to nine killed and 481 injured in 1995, he added.

Addressing the opening session of a two-day workshop organised by the Jordan

National Forum for Women (JNFW), the first of its kind to deal with this issue, Maj. Gen. Basoul related community concern over an annual loss of scores of innocent lives through stray bullets as well as determination to terminate such losses.

Festive firing during different social occasions is a dangerous practice in light of ensuing tragedies and social problems resultant thereof, he said.

Official figures regarding the number of people killed

or injured in firing incidents do not represent actual numbers but only those reported or officially registered with police departments nationally, Maj. Gen. Basoul stated.

Despite the reduction of the number of people killed in such incidents over the past few years, Jordan is in need of social activities and seminars to terminate festive firing in the country, he concluded.

A JNFW representative, Najah Nawaiseh, addressed the meeting, held at the

PSD Officers' Club in Amman, describing the workshop as part of the JNFW national strategy to contribute to promoting public awareness in educational, economic, health and social life in the Kingdom.

Several reports are to be reviewed during the workshop, in which senior PSD officers are participating, dealing with legal, social, religious, and other aspects pertaining to festive firing.

Water is precious — every drop counts...

Sri Lanka army advances, takes rebel frontline town

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan troops pushing into the Tamil rebels' northern heartland Wednesday, captured a heavily fortified rebel-held frontline town, military officials in the area said.

Troops backed by helicopter gunships, artillery and tanks captured Omani, along the strategic Jaffna-Vavuniya north-south highway, on the second day of a major thrust into the mostly jungle-covered northern Wanni region, they said.

"Troops advancing from the army's forward defences in Vavuniya have captured Omani," one official told Reuters.

Omani, a small agricultural community 14 kilometres north of Vavuniya, constituted the southern forward defences of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who control vast swathes of land to its north.

Military officials said a

network of at least 20 rebel bunkers had been destroyed by troops, who had so far encountered little resistance.

Officials in the north raised the rebel casualty in the two-day old offensive, code-named "Jaya Sikuru," or Sure Of Victory, to eight with more than 15 rebels wounded.

The Defence Ministry said Tuesday that four rebels were killed and a "fair number" were wounded, while government forces suffered no casualties after troops advanced five kilometres into the rebel heartland.

Reports from the north said a large number of troops were moving out from at least three places and were most likely heading towards Mankulam, about 40 kilometres north of Vavuniya.

Analysts said the aim of the offensive was to open a land supply route linking Vavuniya, 220 kilometres

north of the capital Colombo, and the Jaffna peninsula, about 100 kilometres further north.

The north-south highway, the key artery which links the Indian Ocean island's south with the war-ravaged north, has been cut off due to fighting between the LTTE and government forces.

The LTTE are fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in predominantly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east in a 13-year old war in which the government says more than 50,000 people have died.

The LTTE say the toll is higher.

Other military officials said a column of troops advancing north from Pampadu, 14 kilometres east of Vavuniya, had met resistance from the rebels Wednesday morning. A few soldiers had been wounded in the battle, they said.

"The advance is firm but slow as security forces steer

their way through mines," one military official in the north said.

Officials said that the navy had also joined the battle and launched a pre-dawn attack on LTTE-held areas on the northeastern coast in Mullaitivu district.

The clandestine Voice of Tiger radio, monitored in Vavuniya, Wednesday confirmed naval attacks on Chennalai and Alampil. It said one fisherman was killed and several others wounded in the attack.

The radio also said that the Sri Lankan Air Force had attacked several areas in the Mullaitivu district Tuesday. Six fishermen were killed and seven wounded in the Mullaitivu area during bombardment by Kfir jets, it said.

A spokesman for the LTTE's international office in London was not immediately available for comment but he told Reuters Tuesday that details of the offensive had not yet reached him.



Two Taiwan police officers escort accused hijacker Liu Shan-Chung from Taipei's domestic airport Wednesday after authorities took custody of Mr. Liu from China earlier in the day. Mr. Liu, an unemployed journalist, commandeered a Taiwan airliner to China's southeastern Xiamen City in March in the first and only hijacking case to go from the island to the mainland in the 1990s (Reuters photo)

China hands hijacker back to Taiwan

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan authorities sailed directly to mainland China Wednesday and took custody of an accused hijacker who faces trial on the island, completing a rare cooperative exchange with its Communist arch-rival.

Taiwan representatives rode a fishing boat from the Taipei-held islet of Quemoy (Jinmen) to nearby Xiamen to fetch Liu Shan-Chung in a handover that stamped an end to Beijing's practice of ferrying Taiwan air pirates as freedom-seekers.

Mr. Liu — who doused himself with petrol aboard a Taiwan passenger jet on March 10 and threatened to set himself ablaze if it did not fly to China — had sought political asylum there, saying he had been persecuted in Nationalist-ruled Taiwan.

Beijing's Communist government said no. "We have received the hijacker," Lee Ching-Ping of Taiwan's quasi-official Straits Exchange Foundation told Reuters by telephone after the morning transfer, which was conducted on the mainland side by the state-sanctioned Chinese Red Cross.

Mr. Liu's handover marked the first hijacker repatriation across the Taiwan Strait and was completed despite the absence of a

formal repatriation pact. Taiwan and China, which have not had formal links since a civil war split them in 1949, reached unofficial consensus on hijacker repatriation in 1995 but failed to sign the accord because of subsequent political frictions.

Those tensions appeared to be easing. Mr. Lee said that even without a formal accord, a spirit of consensus now existed between the bitter rivals who until the 1990s had encouraged defections from the other side as part of cold war ideological propaganda.

"Though the agreement has yet to be signed, we can still complete this transfer on a spirit of consensus that has been reached," Mr. Lee said.

Mr. Lee said his agency was prepared to send back two mainland hijackers who have served out their prison terms on Taiwan. He declined to say when the two might be deported.

"The spirit of consensus can also be used to guide treatment of mainland hijackers in Taiwan," Mr. Lee said.

Taiwan holds 16 mainlanders who hijacked 12 mainland planes to Taiwan in 1993-1994 before China tightened airport security. Unlike mainland hijackers

from the 1950s-1970s who were hailed as freedom fighters and showered with rewards, all 16 were arrested in Taiwan and convicted of air piracy.

In 1986, Beijing made a hero of a Taiwan pilot who rerouted his cargo plane to Guangzhou, and even gave him a job in the civil aviation bureaucracy. Reflecting Beijing's political shift, Mr. Liu was arrested by Xiamen police upon landing and denied political asylum.

The Straits Exchange Foundation urged China to resume a long-stalled dialogue with Taiwan in order to finalise the hijacker repatriation agreement.

"Only through these talks can we have a set rule to guide cross-strait repatriation in the future," Mr. Lee said.

Beijing ended what had been gradually warming quasi-official talks in June 1995 in an angry response to a controversial U.S. visit by Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui, whose trip was seen as part of a strategy to win independence for Taiwan.

Beijing regards the Nationalist-ruled island as a renegade province that eventually must be brought under the mainland's sovereignty.

Taiwan shuffles cabinet in anti-crime move

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party approved a modest reshuffle of the beleaguered cabinet Wednesday, hoping an injection of fresh talent would ease public anger over a perceived breakdown of law and order.

There were no surprises in the list of six appointments, announced by party secretary general Wu Po-Hsiung after a party Central Standing Committee meeting. It conformed with a draft roster leaked to local media Sunday.

As expected, Premier Lien Chan ignored opposition calls for his own resignation. Mr. Lien has pledged to resign in July.

Mr. Wu told reporters the partial reshuffle was President Lee Teng-Hui's response to the public uproar over lawlessness.

"Chairman Lee is concerned about the latest developments in society and feels the need to have a partial reshuffle," Mr. Wu said, referring to Mr. Lee by his title of party chairman.

The shake-up and Mr. Lien's vow to step down soon appeared to appease some of the cabinet's fiercer critics, but pressure on the government was likely to continue.

Mr. Lee faces tough questioning at an annual news conference on Thursday and opposition lawmakers plan to raise a non-binding motion in parliament on Friday demanding Mr. Lien's ouster — the third such move in less than two weeks.

Another test of the reshuffle's success will come on Sunday when civic leaders have called for a mass march against crime.

The last such protest on May 4 drew 50,000 people.

The most significant cabinet portfolio — interior minister — was handed to Yeh Ching-Feng, who was in the cabinet without a portfolio and becomes the first woman to head the Interior Ministry, which oversees Taiwan's police.

Incumbent Lin Feng-Cheng, who resigned on May 8, had come under fire over a wave of serious and still unsolved crimes that have swept the island in recent months — most recently the kidnapping and murder of a television celebrity's teenage daughter.

Taiwan was stunned again Tuesday by police revelations that a 15-year-old boy was kidnapped and killed just two days after media reported the abduction of 17-year-old Pai Hsiao-Yen.

French police hold 8 suspected Islamists

PARIS (R) — Police Wednesday detained eight people in the Paris region suspected of ties to militant Islamic groups in France, which has been the target of bombings by Algerian extremists.

Police said the eight, detained in the suburbs of Seine Saint-Denis and Nanterre, were held for questioning on the orders of anti-terrorism magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere.

But searches at their homes turned up little evidence and no weapons apart from a rifle, police said.

The search was spurred by documents seized in a previous series of raids in December, shortly after a bomb in the Paris underground station killed four people and injured dozens of others.

A police source said there was no evidence of a link between the bombing and any of those detained.

French investigators suspect that Algerian Islamic militants, who claimed responsibility for a previous wave of bombings in 1995 that killed eight people, were behind last year's

bombing. Algerian Muslim militants accuse France, the former colonial power, of propping up the Algerians government.

About 60,000 people have died in fighting in the North African country since early 1992 when authorities cancelled a general election in which radical Islamists had taken a huge lead.

France frequently detains suspects for questioning, often releasing them hours later, in a bid to destabilise support networks of Muslim militants.

Moderator's collapse halts Canada poll debate

OTTAWA (R) — Canada's French-language televised debate for the June 2 federal election was cut short suddenly Tuesday when the moderator collapsed, leaving the five political party leaders stunned.

Moderator Claire Lamarche, a television personality in French-speaking Quebec, fell out of her chair moaning about the heat in the room just as the five political party leaders were about to attack the key election issue of national unity.

"We decided together that the debate should not continue under the circumstances," Arnold Amber, one of organisers of the debate, said in a hastily arranged news conference. "All the parties are in agreement with this."

The party leaders left without speaking to the media.

Canadians had expected a lively debate on how to handle the troubling issue of Quebec independence. But the moderator's collapse made the abbreviated exchange anti-climactic.

Said political scientist Ken McRoberts at York University in Toronto.

"There might have been some dramatic moments in the exchange over the response to a (pro-sovereignty vote)," Mr. McRoberts said in a phone interview from Toronto. "So (separatist Bloc Quebecois leader) Gilles Duceppe must be quite frustrated."

Mr. Duceppe, a Francophone, was sidelined in the English debate Monday night but observers expected him to use the French-language debate to rally the separatist forces and gather support for his waning campaign.

The debate was about two hours into its scheduled two and a half hours when the moderator collapsed, just as Prime Minister Jean Chretien was asked if he would recognise a vote in favour of Quebec sovereignty if it were by a slim margin.

In 1995, people in French-speaking Quebec voted 50.6 per cent against Quebec separation, while 49.4 per cent voted in favour of separation, prompting federalist forces to claim victory.

But instead of exploring how the next government would handle an expected referendum on sovereignty next year, the debate focused on Canada's high unemployment rate, robbing Mr. Duceppe of the chance to stir up nationalist spirit.

But Mr. Chretien, much feistier in the French debate than in Monday night's English debate, fended off his competitors time and again, speaking about his party's economic record.

Juppe defends EU, brands his opponents eccentric

PARIS (R) — Europe took centre stage in France's election campaign Tuesday as Prime Minister Alain Juppe defended the single European currency and branded his foes an "eccentric coalition" putting it at risk.

Mr. Juppe, buoyed by opinion polls but under fire from some of his own allies for lacklustre campaigning for the May 25-June 1 parliamentary election, warned voters against electing a coalition including bitter opponents of the Maastricht Treaty.

A CSA opinion poll, confirming the trend of previous surveys this week, said his centre-right coalition could win a sizeable majority of 80 seats over the combined left in the 577-seat National Assembly.

Mr. Juppe, addressing a rally in the eastern town of Strasbourg, host to the European Parliament, pleaded for Europe and dismissed opposition charges that he was planning a new bout of unpopular austerity to help qualify for the euro from 1999.

"Those who tell you the euro means rigour and unemployment are telling lies," he said, adding that the single currency was the key to growth and jobs.

"If we had to tighten up since 1993, it must not be blamed on Maastricht but on the deficits piled up since 1988," when the Socialists were in power, he said.

Europe was "imperfect ... incomplete, powerless, bureaucratic and often weak, economic, too mercantile, not human and social enough," he said, adding: "Because it has shortcomings should we renounce it altogether?"

"This eccentric coalition stretching from the Communist Party to the (far-right) National Front should make voters pause for thought." Its victory "could lead to a disaster in a world where all countries regroup to be stronger," he said.

Socialist leader Lionel Jospin, campaigning with Greens leader Dominique Voynet who is also representing the Socialists in a constituency in the Jura in eastern France, reiterated that the Socialists were willing to lead a broad-based left-wing government including ecologists or Communists.

A poll for the daily La Croix showed 30 per cent of voters identified with Mr. Juppe's European policies and an equal number with those of Mr. Jospin who favours the euro on certain conditions.

Just 23 per cent identified with parties like the Communists or the National Front which bitterly oppose the Maastricht Treaty Monetary Union, approved by a water-thin majority in a 1992 referendum.

Gaullist ex-national assembly speaker Philippe Seguin, a former anti-Maastricht campaigner, said the

euro must be achieved. But it should not be made amid bitterness and resignation and must above all be a tool against unemployment.

He said the European Union's economic policy should remain under the control of elected political authorities rather than left to the European Central Bank.

Mr. Jospin called the centre-right a threat for France at the millennium. "To have the right for nine years — four already, and five more — to pass the year 2000. I think that it's a major risk for the country," he said. The centre-right won a landslide in 1993 when voters dumped the Socialists.

Both opponents traded charges that their platforms were vague. "Has anyone seen the (centre right's) programme?" Mr. Jospin asked a rally in the central city of Clermont-Ferrand.

Mr. Juppe charged that Socialist campaign promises were vague and said that Mr. Jospin still had to explain how he would fund the creation of 700,000 promised youth jobs as part of a drive to cut record unemployment of 12.8 per cent.

Centrist former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, in an attack on Mr. Juppe, recalled he had named two prime ministers during his 1974-1981 term and suggested Mr. Chirac should consider appointing another premier after the election.

Brazil soap opera trial due to stage final act

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — The final act of a sensational murder case involving Brazilian soap opera actors will begin Wednesday when the former wife of a television star goes on trial for the murder of his screen lover.

Male-Stripper-turned-TV-star Guilherme De Padua, 27, was convicted in January of the murder of his co-star Daniela Perez. The body of the 22-year-old actress was found on a Rio roadside with 16 stab wounds in December 1992.

The actor's former wife Paula Thomaz, 23, was charged jointly with the actor, but maintains she is innocent. Her trial begins Wednesday, a court official said Tuesday. Padua originally confessed to the crime, saying Perez had been hounding him to have

sex with her. But later he accused his ex-wife of murdering the actress out in a fit of jealousy, stabbing Perez at least 15 times with a pair of scissors.

The actor said he had an affair with Perez because her mother, Gloria, was the script writer for the soap opera and it was in his interest to keep her happy.

The case has become Brazil's equivalent to the O.J. Simpson trial in the United States. It has dragged on for almost five years.

Millions of Brazilian soap opera fans have watched its twists and turns as closely as they followed the soap opera, "De Corpo E Alma" (Of Body And Soul), in which Padua shot to fame as the brooding lover of sexy Yasmia, played by Perez.

Korean unification seen costing \$460 billion

HONG KONG (R) — As word seeps out of famine in North Korea, some people are already starting to calculate what it would cost to reunify Stalinist North Korea with the capitalist South.

"No-one, frankly, has an answer," said brokers SBC Warburg in a research report. "But the South Korean government is now beginning to address (this) with more urgency than the past."

Nobody knows if and when the Korean peninsula can be unified. The two Koreas remain technically at war since their devastating 1950-53 war ended with a truce, not a peace pact.

SBC Warburg economist Graham Courtney said the cost of Korean reunification would be immense. He calculates it would be equivalent to seven per cent of South Korea's gross domestic product, or more than the North's entire annual nominal output.

North Korea's economy has been devastated by floods in 1995 and 1996 which destroyed crops and caused food shortages that experts say could lead to

widespread famine this year.

"The obvious starting point for any guessimate of the costs of Korea reunification is the only recent and relevant precedent, that of the reunification of West and East Germany," he said.

Between 1991 and 1995, West Germany provided the equivalent of almost 4.35 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in financial transfers.

Using numbers provided by the Korean Development Institute, SBC Warburg said the first five years after reunification would require almost 10 per cent of the South's net worth per annum and a further 4.8 per cent each year for the subsequent five years — a total of \$460 billion.

SBC Warburg believes about 60 per cent, or \$320 billion, could be raised internally.

Tax receipts totalled \$70 billion in 1996, suggesting that just over \$200 billion could be expected to come in purely as a result of economic growth over a 10-year period.

Another \$120 billion

could be funded through increased tax revenue, but the tax burden on each person would have to be raised by 50 per cent over 10 years, or by 4.1 per cent each year, SBC Warburg said.

"A more realistic assumption of the potential future tax burden is probably something akin to the 7.5 per cent solidarity tax which Germany imposed in 1991," the broker said.

"Anything more than that would potentially create a fiscal contraction in the economy."

However, a 7.5-per cent increase in the South Korean tax burden would bring in only \$18 billion. To attain the domestic funding target of \$320 billion, another \$100 billion would probably have to come from a combination of domestic borrowing and monetisation.

This equates to about 8.4 trillion Korean won in government borrowing each year over the 10-year period. Given that the government currently has net savings of about 23 trillion won, it would need to start tapping the domestic debt market for new money

towards the end of year three.

The remaining \$140 billion in reunification costs would have to come from overseas.

Spread over 10 years, this would amount to less than the level of foreign borrowing — \$120 billion per annum — in 1996 and probably 1997.

"Yet, even if Korea is able to access the borrowing at favourable rates from an international community relieved that the last relic of the cold war has finally been removed, it can hardly be helpful for her to more than double the stock of her foreign debt in a 10-year period," SBC Warburg said.

A number of other imponderables remain, including an assumption that Korea's foreign exchange reserves will continue to rise from trade surpluses when in fact they have been shrinking.

Also, no account has been taken of the inflationary forces that could be unleashed, potential monetary tightening and the loss of exchange rate competitiveness.



Demonstrators hold up their passports as they march Tuesday. Nearly one-third of Gibraltar's 30,000 residents marched down Main Street of the British colony to call for Spanish recognition of their European Union rights. Spain, which has claimed sovereignty over Gibraltar for 300 years, does not recognise locally issued passports (Reuters photo)

Thousands protest against Spain in Gibraltar

GIBRALTAR (R) — Nearly one-third of Gibraltar's 30,000 residents marched down Main Street of the British colony Tuesday to call for Spanish recognition of their European Union rights.

Led by Chief Minister Peter Caruana, the protesters urged Britain to stand firm against political efforts by Spain to prevent the rock peninsula at its southernmost tip from enjoying rights gained when Gibraltar joined the EU with Britain as a dependent territory. Spain, which has claimed

sovereignty over Gibraltar for 300 years, does not recognise locally issued passports and bans sea and air travel to the territory.

In recent months several Gibraltarians were detained by Spanish authorities who refused to recognise their passports.

Mr. Caruana backed the demonstrators, some 8,000 according to local police and 10,000 according to organisers, in saying that the protest was not against the Spanish but against Madrid's policy. "I'm still keeping my hopes for dialogue alive,"

he said. "But we cannot afford to be the only place in Europe where our EU rights are not respected."

Mr. Caruana, in power for a year, said he was disappointed that Spain had hardened its attitude instead of accepting his proposal that Gibraltar be recognised as a third, but not sovereign, party at talks affecting the territory's future.

Spanish officials, who could not be reached for comment Tuesday, have hinted recently that Gibraltar's status should be finally resolved, pointing to Britain's transfer of Hong Kong to China.

"It's difficult to explain how it occurs in Hong Kong and doesn't in Gibraltar," Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said in a recent interview, adding that Spain maintained its claim of sovereignty.

Gibraltarians at the protest said they would not give in to pressure from Spain to become Spanish and they urged Tony Blair's new Labour government to take a firmer stance against Spain than the previous British administration.

U.S. and Russia agree to increase military cooperation

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States and Russia agreed Tuesday to increase defence cooperation in areas ranging from nuclear arms destruction to military reform despite bitter Russian opposition to NATO enlargement.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen and Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov signed agreements to set up joint working groups on anti-missile defence, peacekeeping and post-Soviet reform of Russia's impoverished armed forces.

"There are many problems in which the United States can offer us a great help," said Gen. Rodionov at a joint press conference. "You have great experience on this issue (of democratic military reform), and we need to learn it."

"The consequences of the cold war for us are equal to the consequences of the Vietnam War for you," he said of the need to shrink and revitalise Russia's military, saving costs and developing a professional non-commissioned officer corps.

Both ministers urged Russia's lower House of Parliament, the State Duma, to approve the START-2 nuclear arms reduction treaty, and Gen. Rodionov assured Washington that Moscow's nuclear arsenal was under safe control despite reports this week of technical problems with strategic missiles.

Mr. Cohen announced a

\$52.4 million contract to the U.S. Lockheed Martin Corp. to help set up a facility in Russia to destroy missile canisters and rocket fuel from 410 decommissioned Russian submarine and land-based silos.

Gen. Rodionov called the meeting a "very dynamic start" to two days of talks with top U.S. officials, including White House National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The Russian minister said he welcomed U.S. Defence Department cooperation in a wide range of areas, but he reiterated Moscow's firm opposition to NATO enlargement to include former Communist countries in Eastern Europe.

"In general, I personally think, and will think, that this is a mistake to expand NATO eastward. And this problem may actually damage our relationship," Gen. Rodionov told reporters.

He denied a report in Monday's Washington Times that some Russian strategic nuclear missiles had accidentally gone on alert because of technical difficulties in equipment. He said he had heard of no such problem.

"We do experience some shortages in funding, in financing our armed forces," Gen. Rodionov said. "But nevertheless, the strategic nuclear forces have the same level of funding as they used to have for many years."

"And I want to assure you that we will do everything possible to ensure that the safety and protection of our nuclear arsenals would never decrease."

Gen. Rodionov also said despite another report in the Washington Times, he now was a strong supporter of the START-2 treaty, which would cut nuclear arsenals in the United States and Russia to fewer than 3,500 warheads each.

The Duma has so far refused to approve that treaty although the U.S. Senate ratified it last year.

Mr. Cohen said that the Pentagon was "eager" to provide Russia with specific technical help and cooperation on anti-missile cooperation in order to protect Russia's people and military forces from attack. But he said such direct technical cooperation must wait on a formal statement of agreement.

The Pentagon is currently studying U.S. military strategy and force structure in order to cut costs for weapons modernisation. Mr. Cohen joked that he wanted to seek help from his Russian counterpart to get Congress to agree to any additional painful closing of military bases in America.

"I am going to help Mr. Rodionov — give him advice how to close Russian bases. And he is going to help me persuade the Congress that we should do the same," Mr. Cohen said.

North Korea is main threat to peace, U.S. officer warns China

BEIJING (R) — Top U.S. military officer General John Shalikashvili warned China Wednesday that its long-time Communist ally, North Korea, was the greatest threat to peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

Washington was committed to remaining a regional power and was ready for possible conflict on the Korean peninsula, said Gen. Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a speech to China's National Defence University.

North Korea's economic crisis and the apparent inability of the isolated Stalinist nation to feed its people had helped make it the most dangerous factor in Asian-Pacific relations, he said in a prepared copy of the speech released by U.S. diplomats.

"First, and most threatening, is the unpre-

dictable regime in Pyongyang, which poses a major threat to peace on the Korean peninsula and in the surrounding area," said Gen. Shalikashvili, the most senior U.S. military officer to visit Beijing since 1983.

China has long been one of Pyongyang's closest allies. Chinese soldiers fought alongside North Koreans against U.S.-led United Nations forces during the 1950-53 Korean Civil War.

Analysts say Beijing remains Pyongyang's most important ally, although ties have cooled since China established diplomatic relations with capitalist South Korea in 1992.

Washington welcomed China's efforts to reduce tensions between the rival Koreas and appreciated Beijing's efforts to reduce tensions on the divided peninsula, said Gen. Shalikashvili, who is in the Chinese capital.

South Asian leaders end summit with call for free trade

MALE, Maldives (R) — The leaders of seven South Asian nations ended a three-day summit Wednesday with a pledge to form a free trade zone by 2001 and launch political consultations to promote peace.

Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom said leaders of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had agreed to move up the deadline for a free trade area by four years to 2001.

Mr. Abdul Gayoom, speaking at the concluding session of the bloc's ninth summit meeting, said they had also agreed to initiate political dialogue within SAARC, which in its 12 years has focused on economic and social cooperation.

"We have agreed that a process of informal political consultations would prove useful in fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and building confidence as a means to promoting peace," Mr. Abdul Gayoom said.

Fellow members India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947 and remain at odds over the divided Himalayan region of Kashmir.

"This is indeed an historic decision, one which takes SAARC into an area of new opportunities and great promise," Mr. Abdul Gayoom told delegates in the Maldivian capital, Male.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said the summit would be remembered for the decisions to speed up the formation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and open the door to political consultations.

"There is no doubt that the Male summit constitutes an important milestone in the evolution of SAARC," she said.

Russia remains top priority for Chechenya — Maskhadov

MOSCOW (R) — Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov, buoyed by a peace deal with the Kremlin, said Tuesday that whatever the future Russia, rather than the West or Islamic World, would be the leading partner of his mountainous region.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Mr. Maskhadov as praising President Boris Yeltsin for the courage of signing the document in which two leaders pledged never again to resort to force.

RIA news agency quoted the Chechen president, who had led the rebel army throughout 21 months of its successful resistance to Moscow's attempt to subdue the region's independence, as saying that he was now ready to stand down most of his forces.

"Russia is the great country," Mr. Maskhadov told TASS on return to his capital Grozny. "It is closest to us and practically everything we have is economically linked to Russia."

"That's why first and foremost I am looking at Russia rather than at the West or the Muslim World," Mr. Maskhadov said indicating

a radical change of priorities of his predominantly Muslim region.

Chechen leaders have earlier placed most hopes with the Islamic countries in their defiance of Moscow rule.

They have expressed hopes that the Muslim World would help them to revive Chechenya devastated by the war. Mr. Maskhadov discussed the issue with some Islamic leaders during his pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia last month.

"The war has taught us that we can expect help from nowhere and have to rely on ourselves," Mr. Maskhadov said bitterly.

On the contrary he was full of praise for his recent foe, Mr. Yeltsin, who had sent troops in December 1994 to Chechenya. Tens of thousands people died in the war.

"The step the Russian president made by signing the historical document was a step by a courageous person," Mr. Maskhadov said.

"After all misfortunes which happened in the past, I express my respect to this man."

The deal with Mr. Yeltsin, which according to both leaders had put an end to the centuries of confrontation between the two peoples, has given Mr. Maskhadov a strong boost and allowed him to concentrate on problems at home.

Mr. Maskhadov pledged to clear Chechenya of unruly armed groups in three months. The region of about one million is awash with weaponry and the leadership has faced challenges to its authority from maverick rebel leaders and bandits who are holding several Russian journalists hostage.

RIA quoted Mr. Maskhadov as saying he would retain only a National Guard and that this would be confined to barracks.

Despite a ceasefire in August and the withdrawal of the Russian troops, Mr. Maskhadov had maintained his forces.

Tuesday's treaty avoided defining whether Chechenya was independent or a region of the Russian Federation. Under the ceasefire terms, that key issue was put on ice until 2001.

But Moscow did commit

to building relations with Chechenya "in accordance with... the norms of international law" — a phrase the Chechen leadership seem happy to present to their domestic audience as a recognition of independence.

Boris Berezovsky, deputy secretary of the Kremlin Security Council who helped draft the treaty, told a news conference Tuesday there was no question of Chechenya seceding.

But he said the deal did aim to shore up Mr. Maskhadov's authority against headline secessionist groups.

The treaty, plus a range of economic accords reached Monday, had now given Mr. Maskhadov considerable room for manoeuvre and Mr. Berezovsky said he believed Mr. Maskhadov would be able, for example, to secure the release of Russian captives in Chechenya.

The Kremlin official said that Mr. Yeltsin, who acknowledged the war in Chechenya as one of his biggest errors, had gone further than his own negotiating team in extending a helping hand to Mr. Maskhadov at the risk of criticism from nationalists in Russia.

N. Zealand's Peters avoids wrath over assault; faces MPs

WELLINGTON (R) — New Zealand's flamboyant deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters escaped parliamentary discipline Wednesday over an assault charge, but now faces a grilling by fellow MPs.

A long-awaited report from parliament's Privileges Committee found Mr. Peters, who leads the New Zealand First party, was not in contempt of its internal code in a late-night fracas involving a backbench MP from coalition partner the National Party.

But the committee delivered a slap on the wrist to Mr. Peters, who also holds the cabinet post of treasurer, saying it felt he had assaulted MP John Banks and should apologise to the house.

It called Mr. Peters' con-

duct "unbecoming" and "not of a standard to be expected from a member of parliament."

However, a majority of its members felt the link between the event and proceedings in parliament was "too tenuous" to justify contempt, a specific rule that has to be connected to parliamentary affairs.

The contempt allegation had been made by left-wing alliance leader Jim Anderton after a fracas between Mr. Peters and Mr. Banks outside the debating chamber on March 5.

Mr. Banks and Mr. Anderton said in evidence that Mr. Peters had assaulted and threatened Mr. Banks after a late night parliamentary debate on legislation to delay tax cuts.

Mr. Peters told the panel he put a hand on Mr. Banks to indicate he wanted to continue talking but denied it amounted to an assault.

Mr. Peters has already made his peace with Mr. Banks, an outspoken backbencher, but up to now has

made no formal comment on the matter to parliament as a whole.

That could change Thursday when the report is to be debated at the start of the day's session, and all MPs will have the opportunity to discuss it.

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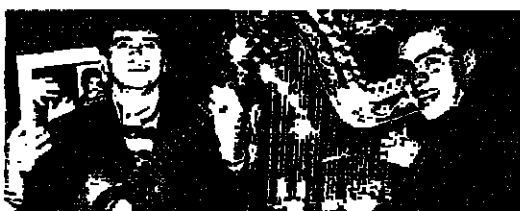
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Values to uphold

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein yesterday sought to dispel suspicions that the next parliamentary elections might be rigged. Jordan has chosen democracy, freedom and dependent respect for human rights as the basic principles for its internal policies and achievement of total regional peace as the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

These two strategic goals of the Kingdom's policies are not only complementary but simultaneously independent on the internal front. Democracy and freedom need to be complemented by economic progress and prosperity which, in turn, are dependent on a genuine peace, involving all the countries of the region. For Jordan, especially, peace should mean an end to the issue of Palestinian refugees and a resolution to the question of which Palestinians are Jordanian and which are not. Only after that question is addressed and resolved can a different set of rules for elections be developed in Jordan. His Majesty observed in his address to army officers Wednesday.

As for those who fear that Jordan might be turned into an alternative homeland for the Palestinians, the King, while affirming that no such option could ever materialise, reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to support the Palestinian people to regain their rights on their national soil.

For that purpose Jordan has been engaging the Israelis on two fronts. On the formal level the Kingdom spares no effort to press on the Israeli government that it must meet the Palestinians halfway and refrain from changing the facts on the ground by building more settlements in the West Bank. On the popular level, aware of the Israeli people's fears, the Jordanian leadership seeks to cultivate the Israeli peace camp and to accelerate its pace.

In its endeavours to push these internal and external policies forward, the leadership wishes that the media be at the forefront of such an effort. But this, unfortunately, is not the case, especially on behalf of some of the tabloid press.

Seeking to win greater readership, some of the tabloid press has sacrificed accuracy and credibility for the sake of winning popularity and monetary gain. These newspapers therefore, call for action to be taken. It is hoped in this regard that the press association moves fast to correct the situation by establishing a press ethics board made of credible and able journalists. Such a body should monitor the performance of the press and intervene at the right moment to correct any misconduct.

The goals that His Majesty the King drew for Jordan yesterday are noble goals which deserve the support of every citizen, especially the opinion leaders among us. Peace, democracy, freedom and respect for human rights are values that need not only be promoted but also defended by every Jordanian.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Aswaq daily urged the Ministry of Supply to come to the aid of the consumers who are now at the mercy of the merchants, particularly the grocers, after the government decided to float prices. Rashid Hassan said that floating the prices has prompted the merchants to hike prices at will and increase the misery of the poor, making the limited-income groups unable to obtain family needs at reasonable cost. Before floating the prices, the concerned government authorities should have ensured two things: that the local markets receive abundant amounts of vegetables and fruit at a constant rate and that there should be open air markets in most districts, thus allowing the consumers to purchase their needs without much trouble and without having to travel long distances for that purpose, said the writer. He noted that the floating of prices followed a period of frost that ruined a great deal of the agricultural produce, resulting in soaring prices for the remaining supply at a time when the demand is highest. If the government has no choice but to float prices, as demanded by the World Bank, then at least the government must control the greed of the merchants and step in to ensure that sufficient quantities of agricultural produce continue to flow into the markets and that the merchants do not impose exorbitant prices on the consumers.

FAHEH FANEK, a writer for Al Rai, expressed fear that Israeli Premier Netanyahu's policies will eventually encroach on Jordan's sovereignty because these policies are bound to drive many more Palestinians from their homeland to seek refuge in Jordan. The writer said that one of his ideas that was circulated recently was giving the Palestinians up to 50 per cent of the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip on which they would be allowed to set up a separate entity, with Israel controlling the border with Jordan and keeping the eastern border between the Palestine entity and Jordan open. By doing so, Mr. Netanyahu will be encroaching on Jordan's sovereignty and allowing the Palestinians free movement eastwards, towards Jordan, and maintaining constant Israeli military threat to Jordan through the deployment of forces along the borders with the Kingdom, noted the writer. It has been the policy of Israel over the past 40 years to create a substitute Palestinian state on Jordanian territory; this has been pursued by the extremist factions of the Israeli political parties since the creation of the state of Israel, continued the writer. He said Israel's actions are not checked by any international law and U.N. resolutions, and because of America's continued backing, the Jewish state is disregarding the sovereignty of the neighbouring countries, maintaining its occupation of Arab lands and defying all principles of international legitimacy.

The View from Academia

Road adventures, or fatal creativity

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

THERE ARE times — and these are quite rare — when the creativity of individuals in our present-day society manifests itself positively. But there are also times — and these are quite frequent — when such creativity manifests itself negatively and fatally. The craziest things you can imagine happen.

The other day, I was driving from Amman to Irbid, taking the now especially scenic and still convenient Sweileh-Jerash-Nu'ayma highway. Scenic, largely because of the green hills, grass and flowers, and convenient, because until now (God knows how long this blessing will continue) traffic lights have not yet become an annoyance on this road and because until now supermarkets, bakeries, schools, shopping complexes, restaurants, etc. have not yet (God knows until when) spread and grown to obstruct the smooth flow of traffic.

I was passing the site of Philadelphia University, when the vehicles in front of me started slowing down significantly. For a few seconds (and the significant slowing down continued to occur frequently until I reached the point of my destination: Irbid), I thought I was driving through a vegetable market — say downtown Amman or Wihdat.

Vegetable and fruit sellers (old men and women, young men, and children) — carrying boxes of all sorts of vegetables and fruit were crossing the highway from one stand of vegetable and fruit on this side to another stand on the other side as busily, leisurely and frequently as they do in a vegetable market. They were doing

this despite the road divider which has been erected for the purpose of preventing people from crossing.

Where is the creativity and ingenuity manifested here? In many things, but mainly in the fact that no vegetable seller confines himself to one stand on one side of the road. Each has parallel stands on this side and the other, the idea being to target passengers travelling in both directions. When a customer does not like any of the produce on display on one side, the seller (the old man or woman, the young man, the child, etc.) rushes to the other side of the highway, climbing over the road divider (some of the dividers have actually been removed by people), grabs a box of vegetables or fruit and rushes back to the waiting customer.

What about the passing traffic? Are we not talking about an 80- or 90-kilometre (high speed) zone? What about those people who are in a hurry to get to Jerash or Irbid and are not in a shopping mood then? Well, it does not matter. The seller wants to make a living, and motorists ought to understand.

Is not it indeed a genuine, creative idea to turn our highways into vegetable markets? Think about it.

Such creativity and ingenuity is not an isolated act or occurrence in our present-day society. Our creativity and ingenuity extends to encompass all situations and walks of life.

A cab driver told me the other day that he would have almost killed a parent and his child had it not been for God's mercy. How did that happen? I asked. The driver was doing 70 km per hour when a man, carrying a child

on his shoulder, jumped right in front of him from the road divider on the Jordan University highway. There are two pedestrian tunnels on the said highway. Rather than walk for a hundred (at times 20 or 30) metres to cross through the tunnel, the creative parent put his child on his shoulders and climbed up the fence and jumped to the other side. Simple.

Road adventures of this sort are part and parcel of long-standing traditions in our part of the world. When I was a schoolboy in the early seventies (the days of the "green" buses — i.e. before the emergence of the present Public Transportation Authority), it was a custom (especially among teachers and "elegant" passengers) to stand at the door of the bus (the doors were always open) and jump onto the street before the bus came to a halt. The earlier you did it (before the bus came to a stop, that is) the more skilful and heroic you were. You might have fallen onto the street and scratch your knees and arms at the beginning, but after a few falls, you would have certainly mastered the art.

That was beautiful. You killed several birds with a stone: you led an adventurous life, got out of the bus before everybody else, impressed the girl passengers or the girls sitting leisurely in front of their houses (or your students if you were a teacher), and had your exercise for the day. Those were good old days.

There are still many similar adventures in our present scene of which we are proud. You probably know at least a couple of them.

Long live our creativity and ingenuity.

'Israel — the only Western country that openly and legally uses torture'

By G. H. Jansen

LAST WEEK, the United Nations Committee Against Torture called upon Israel to attend a hearing at which it was accused of practising torture against Palestinian security detainees. This was an extraordinary summons for the Jewish state which is rarely asked to account for its long-standing, manifold violations of Palestinian human rights. And it was unprecedented because Israel became the first of the Western democracies to be hailed before a quasi-tribunal on charges of systematic and legalised torture.

Torture is being used to the point of amounting to a "crime against humanity," a crime for which individuals could be accused before an international court. By using torture, Israel is in flagrant breach of its obligation to abide by the 1984 U.N. Convention Against Torture, which the Jewish state ratified in 1991. The facts are these: In the nearly 30 years since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, it has been using torture against Palestinians caught resisting the occupation or considered security risks. Torture was stepped up during the Palestinian uprising, the intifada, between 1987-93 and, according to the U.N. committee's report, has not eased off, in spite of the Palestinian-Israeli peace accord of September 1993. About 5,000 Palestinians annually pass through the hands of the Israeli internal

security service, Shin Bet, and virtually all suffer some form of coercive pressure amounting to torture. This means that the use of torture is routine and not extraordinary and rare. Thus, it is no small matter which can easily be passed over and forgotten.

At least seven methods of exerting "moderate physical pressure" have been officially approved by the Israeli Supreme Court which conducted an extensive investigation (the Landau Commission headed by a justice) into the use of torture by the Israeli intelligence apparatus during the intifada. By recommending the use of a limited number of methods of torture, the court opened the door to a whole host of ugly practices.

The chief desiderata of Israeli methods is that they should not leave marks or scars on the body of the prisoners so as not to provide evidence of what has been done. Hence, Israelis use prolonged sleep deprivation, confinement in small cells or contorted positions, hooding and sensory deprivation, electric shocks, hanging upside down, standing for long periods in an exposed courtyard in all weathers and violent "shaking" — a method which has killed several Palestinians in recent years.

The clever Israelis have even evolved, after a certain amount of research, a new form of torture of their own, called "shabeh", where a prisoner, head covered in a

foul-smelling hood, is for hours on end seated on a low chair which is tilted forward. Three times a day the prisoner is allowed five minutes to use the toilet and eat and he is permitted a shower once a week.

These are worse conditions than those to which the much-publicised "prisoners of Zion" were subjected to when held in the Soviet gulags.

And they continue to be used in the Jewish state without much of a fuss being made at home or in the outside world, precisely because Israelis and Jews themselves have too often been victims in the past. But, as the saying goes, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." (The more things change the more they are the same).

The Israelis officially defended themselves before the committee and the bar of world opinion, first informed of Israel's activities by the report, by claiming that the methods they use actually do not amount to torture.

Considering the methods used, that claim is sophistry and a bitter joke.

When that did not work, the Israelis said they face extraordinary circumstances which require extraordinary methods. Israeli spokesmen justified the use of torture in a case of "a ticking bomb," a detainee who could provide information on an imminent "terrorist" attack inside Israel. The Israelis claim to have foiled 90 such attacks in recent years. But

they have not mentioned how many of these attacks have been averted by submitting informants to interrogation by torture. And the "ticking bomb" theory does not justify wholesale use of torture on Palestinian detainees, the majority of whom are held for stone throwing, violating the laws or demonstrating against the occupation.

When this justification does not convince, the Israelis argue that they are fighting for their very existence against "terrorists." But this argument is also false because since its establishment, in 1948, 49 years ago today (May 15th), Israel has never faced extinction.

It might have been thought that a prolonged experience of "man's inhumanity to man" would have made it impossible for Jewish Israelis to treat anyone, and particularly their

prisoners? There is the really important, human question, "How can the Israelis use torture?" Meaning, how can the Israelis bring themselves to use torture?

This question must be put because the Israelis are all Jews, and the Jews, as a group and over the centuries, have been persecuted and physically ill-treated, particularly in a massive and concentrated way during the holocaust.

It might have been thought that a prolonged experience of "man's inhumanity to man" would have made it impossible for Jewish Israelis to treat anyone, and particularly their

front of the campaign for the human rights of blacks in the 1960s, demonstrated that this romantic, optimistic theory has some basis.

But the second theory is, unfortunately, more realistic. This has been eloquently expounded by the famous English novelist W. Somerset Maugham, author of "The Razor's Edge" and "Of Human Bondage", whose belief was that all suffering degraded and coarsened and that familiarity with cruelty and suffering made that person that much more willing to inflict cruelty. His conclusion was that a victim of suffering can never be as good a human being after experiencing abuse as he was before it.

That theory would seem to be a perfectly adequate explanation not only of the readiness of Jewish Israelis to use torture. Insensitivity to suffering is combined with other factors, anti-Arab racism and a general Israeli roughness and brusqueness, to produce a perverse attitude of approving and accepting practices which are not at all acceptable.

"Insensitivity to suffering is combined with other factors, anti-Arab racism and a general Israeli roughness and brusqueness, to produce a perverse attitude of approving and accepting practices which are not at all acceptable."

The Israelis are, of course, uniquely under pressure since they are surrounded by enemies. But they are so situated because nearly half a century ago Jewish Zionists insisted on thrusting an alien entity into the heart of Arab West Asia.

But that, in the words of Kipling, is another story. The story under investigation remains Israel's use of torture. Apart from what may be called a "factual" question, like, "Why do the Israelis use torture against

Arab and Palestinian neighbours, cruelly and would have made them refrain from using torture against them.

There are two theories on the effects of suffering on human beings:

The first sentimental and romantic theory is that suffering can strengthen and perhaps even ennoble those undergoing it, so that the victim can even be a better person after suffering than before it. Jews living in the U.S., who were in the fore-

LETTERS

Economic freedom vs political openness

DR. FAHEH FANEK's comments in his column titled "Middle East economic conferences losing steam" (May 11, 1997), presented some interesting points regarding the present condition and the future of cooperative economic ventures in the region.

Unfortunately, Dr. Faneh, in my view, presents a distorted assessment of the problems and potentials characterising regional economic endeavours. I base my opinion upon several points which I believe should be considered before scuttling "Casablanca 4" and other efforts to promote development within this area. Specifically, I would raise the following issues:

1. Placing such importance upon Israeli participation plays into the hands of the present leadership in that state: even without Israel's cooperation, there can be no economic progress in the Middle East.

2. In placing such an importance on Israel, one denigrates the abilities of the Arab states to proceed on their own, suggesting they can only advance with the "advice and consent" of Mr. Netanyahu.

3. In acknowledging the critical role of the United States, Dr. Faneh appears to minimise the potential for other actors to assume leadership in the promotion of regional economic development. Should we concede that America and no other power can lead in the region?

In the United States we have an expression: "The tail is wagging the dog." It is obvious that as regards American foreign policy in the area, "the tail has wagged the dog" in the sense that Israel has been enabled to exert considerable influence on the policy of my country.

However, it seems to me that Dr. Faneh is acknowledging and accepting this phenomenon by expressing the view that there can be no regional cooperation without the presence of Israel. This idea must be welcome news

to the Likud Party because it reinforces their position: accept our conditions or forget about any potential for peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

I would be so bold as to recommend that the leading nations in this area shed their preoccupation with Israel and attempt to create a cooperative economic system based upon the regional conditions sans Israel and/or the United States. If one includes Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and the other nations in the region, the development potentials are considerable, with or without Israeli and American participation. Historically, nations and regions have advanced when they possessed certain assets: population size; natural resources; human skills; responsive political systems; free market economies; individual freedoms.

In evaluating the potentials of the Middle East, there appears to be some reasons for optimism. There is a large population base that is well-educated and entrepreneurial in its approach to business. Natural resources, other than water, are abundant, and there is no reason the region cannot be self-sufficient in energy and foodstuffs, the foundations of any modern economic system. Free-market systems are being implemented, albeit belatedly and under the direct pressure of international financial institutions, i.e. the World Bank, IMF, etc.

While all these present a positive picture of the region, there are negative factors which must be considered: the relative absence of responsive governments and individual freedoms. These may present a challenge to economic development, but will not necessarily prevent advancements within individual countries and the region. Ultimately, democratisation will need to accompany economic liberalism. However, as the experience of the Western world demonstrates, economic freedoms

may precede, and then impel, political openness.

I believe that it is necessary to first question the blind acceptance of the need to involve Israel and the United States in any regional economic efforts and then to present a case that their roles, while helpful, are not essential.

Present realities in the Middle East present a challenge to the leaders and peoples of the region. They can either accept the past conditions as the parameters for any future progress or, conversely, they can refute those parameters and create new dynamics for change.

In the final analysis, from an economic standpoint, it is Israel and the United States who have the most to lose if the Arab states demonstrate their willingness and ability to pursue economic development through their own initiatives with the Cupertino of other players (Western Europe, Japan, etc.). Israel is already paying an economic price for the policies of the ruling party. This price will increase if they were to be excluded from the economic growth of the other states in the area. Likewise, corporate America recognises the potentials for doing business in the region, and will not accept being excluded because of misdirected policies of their government.

Perhaps the problems in implementing a permanent peace agreement in the Middle East present an opportunity for the Arab countries to adopt innovative approaches which represent their best interests.

I would challenge each and every government to throw off the cloak of post-colonial influences which characterises present efforts to resolve the dilemma, and implement new processes for development and change.

William Ennenbach,
Amman

Society on the Move

Making the news at home and abroad

Telling features of the at times turbulent water meetings between Jordan and Israel over the past two weeks were the characterisations of one of Jordan's key players to the talks. At the meeting attended by His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Crown Prince looked at the Israeli officials present and said, "Here comes our villain." He was speaking of none other than Minister of Water and Irrigation (since no words) Munther Haddadin. Then, directing his comment to King Hussein, Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Ariel Sharon bellowed out that he has heard of himself described in Arab circles by all sorts of harsh adjectives, but that he finds himself "soft compared to your Dr. Haddadin." Behind the scenes, no amount of homework could have prepared Mr. Sharon for what the Israeli daily Maariv headlined as "Haddadin's unmanned missile." It was Dr. Haddadin's proposal that Jordan be supplied with water from Lake Tiberias which caught the Israeli minister off guard. In the end, the agreement worked out in favour of Dr. Haddadin's motion, and thus 25-30 million cubic metres (mcm) of the 50 mcm that Israel is to supply to Jordan, as stipulated in last Thursday's agreement, will come from Lake Tiberias. Dr. Haddadin has been on top of the water situation between Jordan and Israel since the start of the peace talks in Madrid in 1991 and is also often described as one not to be hoodwinked.

UP THE LADDER: At the Office of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Crown Prince's private secretary, Samir Rifai has once again been promoted. This time, the mild-mannered Mr. Rifai takes on the post of director of the Private Office of the Crown Prince. Mr. Rifai joined Prince Hassan's team in 1988 following his graduation from Cambridge University with an M.Phil.

MUCH ADO ABOUT ODED: When word first surfaced on Tuesday that Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran was resigning, some would-be analysts jumped to the conclusion that Dr. Eran may have been upset at the turnout

for the reception marking Israel's 49th anniversary. Admittedly embassy staff expected fewer attendees this year, but they reported that the showing was much more than they had anticipated. About 450 officials, diplomats and associates appeared at the Forte Grand ballroom for the reception hosted by Deputy Chief of Mission Jacob Rosen and his wife Annette. Ambassador Eran was not the host because at the time the invitations to the event were delivered, he had not yet presented his credentials. He did, however, later present them to Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh and thus was able to attend the reception as the head envoy of his embassy. The event also marked the first time Jordanian ministers made an appearance at the Jewish state's independence day celebrations. Those who came were Dr. Tarawneh, Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, and Minister of Tourism Akel Biltaji.

EYING TALENT:

The BBC World Service is featuring young entrepreneurs from Asia and Africa on one of its business programmes, and the person they selected to interview from Jordan is Mohammad Qawasmí, general manager of Master Tours in Amman. Mr. Qawasmí has been in the travel industry for 11 years. He opened Master Tours last year at the Seventh Circle City Terminal complex. The radio programme, meant to provide advice for new growing businesses, is in six parts: the first episode aired on Tuesday



Mohammad Qawasmí

morning. The participants were interviewed by Dee Palmer of Business Sound Ltd. in London. The oddity is that Mr. Qawasmí has no idea how he was chosen to take part in the programme. But someone must have taken note of what Mr. Qawasmí says is his philosophy of "putting the customer first." Each case study presented is analysed on the broadcast by Prof. Malcolm Harper of the Cranfield School of Management in the U.K. Keen entrepreneurs tell us to be aware of the "talent" scouts — professionalism pays off in more ways than one.

SPORTS

SPICE: Featured in the Spring 1997 issue of the Brigham Young Magazine of the university by the same name in the U.S. is a five-page spread on Jumana Salti, Jordan's top woman basketball player. Ms. Salti, a freshman at Brigham Young University, was described in the feature as "Jordanian spice," and as "the Michael Jordan of Jordan." She is the only Jumana Salti Jordanian woman athlete ever to compete in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletics Association) Division I level in any sport. Ms. Salti, the daughter of Amer and Rebecca Salti, will be joining Jordan's National Women's Basketball Team for the



the speaker of the lower house of parliament. "Holidays have to come down. We have to work more."

Better ways to honour leaders

A recent telephone survey conducted by the Times of India showed that more than 80 per cent of the 302 New Delhi residents polled believed there were too many public holidays. Nearly 90 per cent said there were better ways of honouring great leaders. Officials in the private sector, which works on all but the most major festivals, seethe at their frequent inability to reach bureaucrats, who many Indians already regard as

Pan-Arab Games which will be held in Beirut in July.

CHARITABLE DISPLAY: With the inauguration of its chancery and the Quaid-e-Azam Hall the Embassy of Pakistan Tuesday opened an exhibition by young Jordanian artists. The event, which will last until May 20, is presented by the embassy in cooperation with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the Friends of Archaeology and the Friends of Dana. The art work on display includes paintings, sculptures, mosaics, ceramics, as well as indigenous jewellery and food products produced by the people of Dana. Friends of Dana, a charitable society established in 1991, raises funds to help the people of Dana in restoring their homes and raising their living standards. Pakistani Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi believes the exhibition is a "worthy objective that deserves the embassy's full support" and adds that the embassy is ready to host and extend related assistance to similar charitable and social welfare causes in Jordan. The Pakistani embassy is located in Jabal Weibdeh.

RARE EXHIBIT: The terminology, one-of-a-kind, is being applied to an art exhibit sponsored by the United States Information Agency and scheduled to open on May 21 at the American Center. The One-of-a-Kind Book Exhibit will include works of artists' books that have become an art form freely intermixed with traditional paintings and sculpture in contemporary exhibitions. According to the organisers, the books are not meant to be "read" but are formal constructions in shape and colour. The exhibit, which is touring the Middle East, is curated by Dr. Suzanne Horvitz, founder of the Nexus Foundation for Today's Art, and Ann Raman, gallery director of the Nexus Foundation National Group of Artists. It will run until June 25.

Jennifer Hamarneh

In India, every day is a holiday

By Sonali Verma
Reuters

NEW DELHI — There's a wry saying going around Delhi: If it's Tuesday, it must be... a holiday.

Indians and foreigners alike, frustrated at finding banks, government offices and courts often unexpectedly closed, say India seems to have more holidays than other countries.

Government offices, banks and markets are officially shut on about 20 days a year, most marking festivals that are celebrated by secular India's Hindu majority and its Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Parsi minorities.

But what really puts most Indians' backs up is that the government also declares

public holidays every time an important politician dies.

Consumer's nightmare, schoolboy's dream when former Prime Minister Morarji Desai died in April 1995, the government abruptly declared seven days of state mourning. Combined with the scheduled Easter holiday, schools, banks, courts, markets and offices shut down for an entire week.

Consumers watched as automatic cash machines ran dry, brokers stuck with unplanned outstanding positions wrung their hands and traders scrambled to mobilise funds for imports arriving from countries that were still working.

Driven by fury over the shuttered businesses and

unanswered telephones, consumer rights activist H.D. Shourie said he even tried pleading with the Supreme Court to ensure there were more working days every year.

"It is a matter of disgrace for any country. Holidays completely disrupt work," says Mr. Shourie.

"Most countries take eight or 12 days off a year. But more than a dozen national holidays plus separate state holidays plus restricted holidays? This is absurd."

The court rejected his plea, saying declaring holidays was the government's business.

Take-two-get-nine principle

In one week in April this

year, Monday, Wednesday and Friday were all federal government holidays.

"It's the take-two-get-nine principle, that most people follow," said Mr. Shourie, referring to the tendency to take Tuesday and Thursday off as well, making it nine days at a stretch during which the government was not functioning.

The holidays are often linked to groups that politicians go all out to court: one was the birthday of a popular low-caste leader, another the birthday of Hindu warrior-god Rama, and the third the Muslim Eid Al Adha.

The lower castes, Hindus and Muslims are all powerful voting constituencies in the world's most populous

democracy.

"Doing out holidays is part of what you may call competitive politics," said D.L. Sheth, a sociologist at the Delhi-based Centre for Study of Developing Societies.

"This new kind of iconography is dangerous and it only panders to egos," says Mr. Sheth. "For example, they don't even celebrate the Prophet Mohammed's birthday in Islamic countries, but our government recently declared it a holiday."

Even government officials, always the first to lock their doors and go home, seem alarmed.

"I think India is the only country where there is a countless number of holidays," said Purno Sangma,

the speaker of the lower house of parliament.

"Holidays have to come down. We have to work more."

Better ways to honour leaders

A recent telephone survey conducted by the Times of India showed that more than 80 per cent of the 302 New Delhi residents polled believed there were too many public holidays. Nearly 90 per cent said there were better ways of honouring great leaders. Officials in the private sector, which works on all but the most major festivals, seethe at their frequent inability to reach bureaucrats, who many Indians already regard as

corrupt, inefficient and spoilt by the trappings of power.

"How can you get anything done when every third day is a holiday? The momentum never really builds," said one exasperated accountant.

When parliamentary Speaker Sangma chided Indian banks for inefficiency at a recent business conference, one banker stood up and told him that banks were forced to close because the government kept declaring holidays.

The normally calm Sangma pounded his fist on the table and angrily replied: "Can you imagine, we actually pay respect to our leaders by not working? We should work an extra hour when someone dies

instead of closing everything."

"It is so painful to have to adjourn parliament every time some member dies," he added.

Parliament is usually adjourned for the day when a member dies. If the death occurs when parliament is out of session, the house adjourns on the day that it reconvenes. The average lawmaker is 53 years old and average life expectancy is 64 years.

"In other countries, they have three minutes' silence," said Mr. Shourie. "People get up, pay homage, and then get on with their work. The cost of it, the sheer waste of human endeavour here is shameful."

Nervousness as officials prescribe heroin for addicts

The suggestion that heroin should be supplied to addicts tends to provoke a knee-jerk negative reaction from narcotics officials, worried that the approach will weaken drug-control measures. But Switzerland says the policy is notching up successes.

By Eve Koudri Kuhn

VIENNA — Several Western governments are keeping a close watch on a trial scheme in Switzerland that provides addicts with heroin under medical supervision. A delegate to a recent United Nations conference on narcotics in Vienna said that although governments were wary of making public statements on the drugs problem, most were facing crisis point: "The prisons are full and authorities have been unable to stop the flow of heroin into their countries."

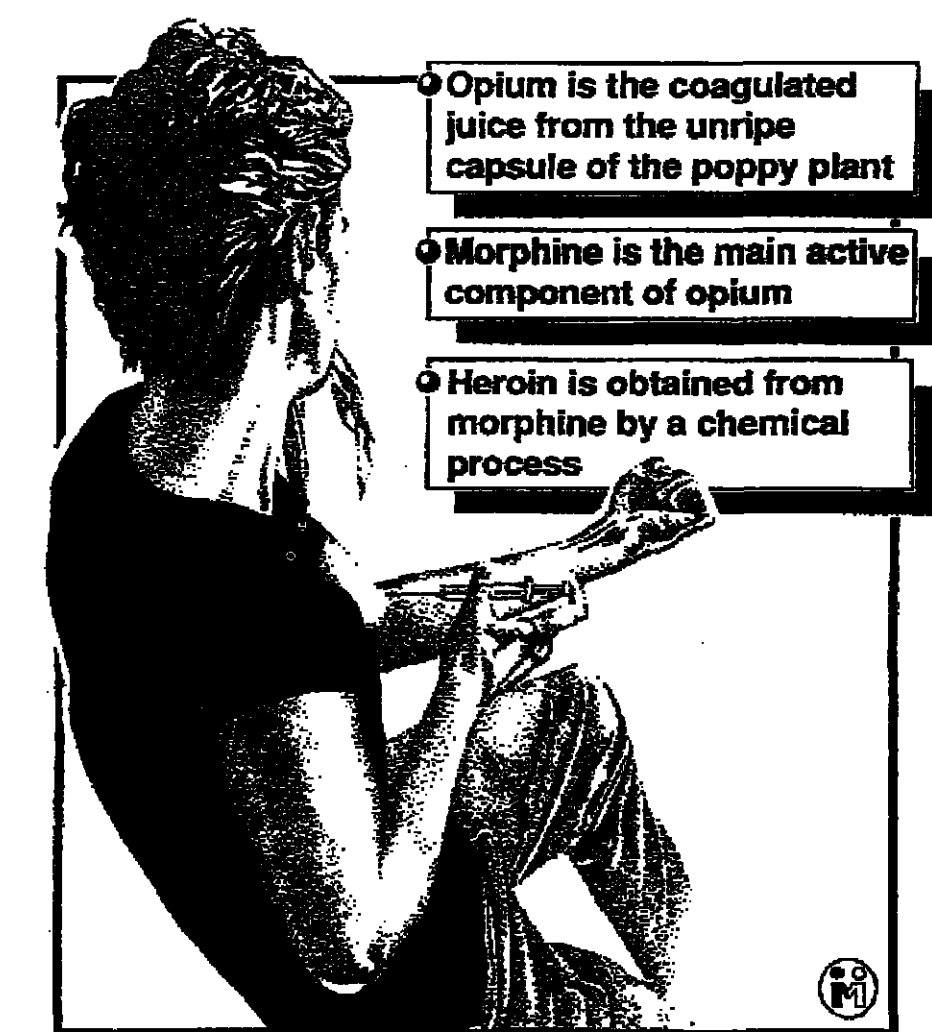
"There is now a segment of the heroin population that will never get off the drug — the hard-core addicts — and society must decide what to do. The problem will not go away by ignoring the facts."

Swiss officials insist that their country is ahead of the times and that many of those who oppose the provision of heroin are not experts but politicians.

"We were the first country to have a needle-exchange programme" to discourage addicts from spreading diseases, particularly AIDS, through shared syringes, said a Swiss delegate. "Everyone was against that, too, and now it has been adopted by many countries. When we started the needle-exchange programme, 40 per cent of new addicts were HIV positive. Now the figure is only four per cent."

With 30,000 heroin addicts out of a population of seven million, Switzerland has one of the world's highest addiction rates. About 800 of them have been receiving medically prescribed heroin under an experimental programme supervised by the U.N.'s World Health Organisation (WHO).

The programme concentrates on addicts who have failed to respond to other treatments. Paul Dietschy, of the Swiss Federal Health Office, says the patients' health and social lives have



Opium is the coagulated juice from the unripe capsule of the poppy plant

Morphine is the main active component of opium

Heroin is obtained from morphine by a chemical process

improved and criminality has decreased.

A Swiss report presented to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs says that the intake of some addicts has

been halved and that more addicts have remained with this programme than have stayed on other forms of treatment.

Switzerland emphasises

that it does not favour liberalisation of drug policies and that it takes care to ensure that heroin provided under the programme does not leak into the illicit mar-

ket.

The project's aim is to attract heroin abusers who are difficult to reach through other methods of treatment, to improve their health and social status (including reduction of risk behaviour) and, if possible, enable them to break their addiction. The average age of users is 30, and most have been on drugs for at least 10 years. Many have paid for their habit by crime or prostitution.

This is not the first time that heroin has been officially provided for addicts. In Britain, 36 doctors are authorised to prescribe the drug.

Now Holland has notified the International Narcotics Control Board that it, too, is considering trying this approach. Holland has 25,000 heroin addicts, mostly of an older generation who inhale rather than inject the drug. Only 6,000 have been involved in crime.

"It is not for the criminal element that we are starting the programme," says a Dutch official. "It is for the health and social improvement of the addicts."

Australia has also studied the Swiss programme. Kerry MacDermott, adviser for the Office of Law Enforcement Policy in Australia, says that although many heroin addicts give up the drug when they reach the age of 35 to 40, a small

group keeps consuming.

If someone is to remain an addict for their entire life because of the availability of heroin on the street, then providing cheap and uncontaminated heroin may be the answer, he says.

"There are so many crimes because of the high cost of drugs. Addicts usually have to sell drugs just to pay for their habit," Mr. MacDermott points out.

A few participants at the conference cautiously supported the right to prescribe heroin — under tight control and a limited number of addicts — as a way of improving the health of individuals unable to recover from their addiction using other treatments.

Most delegates, however, were against heroin trials. One expert said the difference between heroin and a prescribed substitute, methadone, was that the latter did not give the addict the "rush" associated with the former. "They (the Swiss) are promoting euphoria," said another critic.

The general worry is that the policy perpetuates addiction. It offers no incentive to stop or reduce heroin use, and there could be long-term negative effects. There is a widespread fear that legal prescription of heroin could be a gateway to wider legalisation of narcotic drugs, and that the scheme focuses on the

patient and not on the effect of such programmes on society at large.

"Such a measure might have an impact on the attitudes of young people towards drugs and could jeopardise prevention efforts already undertaken," said one delegate.

The Swiss government will issue a report on the programme in July. The WHO is not expected to give official endorsement.

Alan Lopez, the WHO's acting programme manager on substance abuse, says that "the advocacy for the non-medical use of heroin and the controlled supply of heroin, without medical supervision, was not founded on any scientific or practical experiments and could be harmful to any country in which such a practice might be initiated."

The WHO's executive board feels such studies might lead to greater advocacy for heroin use and could compromise the effectiveness of measures to reduce demand and cut off supplies.

This attitude is backed by Japanese officials, who say they have reduced the number of addicts from 40,000 in the mid-1960's to between 400 and 800 today by choking supply channels.

"There was nothing to do but to get off heroin," said a Japanese delegate — Gemini News.

Read the manual

By Jean-Claude Elias

CONSTANT CHANGE is the rule in computer software. Every new programme, every new version of a given programme, brings with it a certain amount of new functions, of operating procedures, shortcuts to learn. In extreme cases, one is forced to learn completely new principles and methods. The ground on which such information is available is so moving, so unpredictable, that colleges and universities are unable to offer it to their students — at least not on a systematic, updated basis. Even computer graduates are left on their own to keep up with the trend.

Where does one go to learn how to operate a PC programme like, say, Excel 97? There are different approaches, depending on one's background. The simplest is the empiric method, the time-honoured trial-and-error. It's painful, it's long but it works, provided one is patient and has enough motivation. Another is to register with a certified training centre and follow a structured training course.

However, the best and least expensive way to find your way around a software package is... to read the manual. It may sound trivial, but think twice — how many of you, of us, do actually read the documentation that comes with software that one buys? Whether in Jordan, in Singapore, in the U.S. or in Australia, it has been proven that a very small percentage of PC users reads the manual and that out of this number only a minority goes beyond the first few pages.

Computer companies who provide on-line services and assistance often help their customers with a simple answer: "read the manual, page xxx, paragraph yyy." What is it that makes us reluctant to browse through these books? They are usually very well prepared and contain comprehensive information about the programmes and the machines. Most of them include a practical index for quick search and cross-referencing. Our massive rejection of such documentation certainly cannot come from its quality — it's excellent, most of the time.

Those who get pirated, illegal copies of software used to have a good excuse for not reading the manual: They were not given any! Such an excuse is not valid anymore.

chip talk



Software designers have recently developed the highly commendable habit to provide, embedded within the programme, an on-line manual, in electronic format. That is the actual contents of the paper manual, but on disk, included with the software. Even with illegal copies.

The on-line, electronic manual is a very practical tool, always available to consult on the screen. One still has the option to produce a printed copy, on hard paper of any section that presents a particular interest. With all these facilities, what else remains for us to do in order to make an efficient use of software? Even the laziest has no excuse.

From my own experience as a computer professional since 1978, each time I browse through a software user manual, I discover something new, useful, that I couldn't find by simple intuition.

If the simplest functions and features are always easy to reveal, some require a more systematic approach.

Admitted, reading documentation, on paper or on screen, can be a tedious and time consuming task. It is however, a matter of simple investment calculation. The benefit in terms of productivity is well superior — and by far — to the time and effort spent on reading and learning before actually using. Give it a try.

Fast cars, faxes, and the efficiency inspection

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

"CARS" IS our topic of conversation for this week.

For one thing, there was a Formula 1 race this past Sunday. Sadly, it did not have the kind of conclusion I had been hoping for. Plainly, the wrong guy won. They always do, don't they?

I am not generally fond of fast cars, but there is something about the precision and speed of F1 that grabs my attention.

More about cars: Fast cars.

It was quite pleasing to see four patrol vehicles parked outside my front-door having trapped two teenagers driving recklessly around the roundabout nearby. But, I could not help but wonder whether the situation did require four cars, and at least eight officers, to bring it under control? Moreover, should a kid threatening to call influential relatives to have a chat with the police be taken notice of in this age of openness and public accountability? And shouldn't each one of us be held responsible for his and her actions before the law? After all, we are supposed to be all equal, aren't we?

Moving on, I am generally not too fond of short cuts either. You will find that I normally do not believe in their usefulness because, as an alternative, they can sometimes turn out to be quite gruesome.

Even though, and being the picky person I am, I can't help but wonder what it is that makes a person go for that which is hidden from view when the answer can be in plain sight.

In all this, I do not want to play the role of the grim reaper at a time when, as we are constantly being told, so much optimism is all around us, but I would like to point out that the obvious must never be overlooked.

Not overlooking the obvious can mean that we not only ignore so much of what is being written and said, but also focus on what our instincts try to dictate.

For these reasons, our own experiences are very important, and it is these experiences that tell us we should never ever follow a short cut.



But because of the hype about renewal and modernisation, I had decided to put these modern theories to the test. P.S. Suffice it to say that I should have followed my instincts instead.

The myth of modernisation tells us that you can renew your car's licence and registration at any police post, inside any one of our major cities.

Reality on the other hand tells us the opposite, that we cannot do it at any post but at designated ones only.

This exercise therefore begins with a journey to the designated post.

In itself, this step is easy, but you can be told on arrival that they do not keep the necessary forms and that you should go to another post.

However, this need not be a problem. You are already one step ahead because you have been given a stack of forms from the previous post you had been to thinking it was your designated one.

The next step is far easier. You locate the officer in charge who then faxes your application to the headquarters in Marka.

You are then told to come back the next day, which you do, only to be told that due to an efficiency inspection taking place, your application had not yet been processed.

Two days later, you are handed back your application along with the fax transmission verification report and are told it would be better if you were to pursue the cause on your own. And pursue it you shall.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, May 15, 1997

3:30 The Holy Koran
3:35 Cartoon
4:00 Curiosity Show
4:30 They Came From Outer Space
4:50 N.B.A.
5:25 Out Of This World
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 French Programme
7:30 News headlines
7:35 Parenthood
8:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
8:30 The American Chart Show
9:10 Kung Fu — The Legend Continues
10:00 News In English
10:25 Feature Film — Joe Versue The Volcano
Starring: Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan
12:00 Taratata

7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air (Comedy)
8:00 World Echo (Doc.)
8:30 Side Effects (Medical Drama)
9:10 Nautilus (Doc.)
10:00 News In English
10:30 One West Waikiki (New Series)
11:15 Sisters

Monday, May 19, 1997

3:30 The Holy Koran
3:35 French Programme
4:00 The German Scene (Documentary)
4:25 Deep Water Haven
4:50 The Ocean Girl
5:15 Extra Dimensions
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 French Programme
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 One foot in The Grave
8:00 Secrets Of Science
8:30 Murder She Wrote (Drama)
9:10 Highlander (Drama)
10:00 News In English
10:25 The Write Verdict
11:15 Cinder Path (Mini Series)

Tuesday, May 20, 1997

3:30 Holy Koran
3:35 French Cartoon
4:00 Super Sport Follies
4:30 Dog House (Children Drama)
5:00 Preserving For The Faste Of It (Doc.)
5:10 The Album Show
6:00 French Programmes
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Coach
8:00 Tilt 23.5
8:30 Encounter
9:10 Nature Of Things (Documentary)
10:00 News In English
10:30 Snowy River
11:15 Mission Impossible

Wednesday, May 21, 1997

3:30 Holy Koran
3:35 French Cartoon
4:00 America's Funniest People
4:30 Spell Binder (New)
4:50 Forests Of The World (Doc.)
5:30 Bordertown
6:00 French Programmes
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Grace Under Fire (Doc.)
8:00 World War II (Documentary)
8:30 Challenges
9:10 Spenser For Hire
10:00 News In English
10:25 Cobra
11:15 Hart To Hart

Friday, May 16, 1997

2:00 The Holy Koran
2:05 The Mask
2:35 Flintstones
3:00 Playabout + How To Draw Cartoon
3:20 French Programme
4:00 Winners Down Under
5:00 High Tech-Culture (Doc.)
5:30 French Programmes
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 French Programme
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 America's Funniest Home Videos
8:00 The Health Show
8:30 Hawkeye
9:10 Power Of Dreams (Doc.)
10:00 News In English
10:20 Voice Of The Heart (Mini Series) (P. 3 of 4)

Saturday, May 17, 1997

3:30 The Holy Koran
3:35 French Programmes
4:00 Gillene (Sports)
4:30 Innovation (Doc.)
4:50 Tilt 23.5
5:15 Blue Heelers
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 French Programme
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Hanging with Mr. Cooper (Comedy)
8:00 Magazine Zero One
8:30 Prism
9:10 Time Trax (Science Fictor)
10:00 News In English
10:25 MacGyver
11:15 Feature Film — Killer Rules
Starring: Jamey Sheridan and Sela Ward

Sunday, May 18, 1997

3:30 The Holy Koran
3:35 French Programme
4:00 The Global Family (Doc.)
4:30 Energy Express
5:10 Clear Water Big Fish (Doc.)
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 French Programme

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mohammad A. Shuqair

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** Easy come easy go.
Ma ta'ti behi ar-reyah ta'khuthuhu as-zawabi.
Ma ta'ti behi ar-reyah ta'khuthuhu as-zawabi.
** He has his superiors' satisfaction.
Haza ala reda ru'asaa'ehi.
Haza ala reda ru'asaa'ehi.
** I'm up to the ears in love with you.
Ana mughram behobbek.
Ana mughram behobbek.
** Would to Gold I had died for you.
Laylani mutto fida'an anki.
Laylani mutto fida'an anki.
** You look charming without make-up.
Tabdeen fatina bidoon makyaj.
Tabdeen fatina bidoon makyaj.
** I feel I lose my senses whenever I see you.
Ash'or waka'anni afqid sawabi indama araki.
Ash'or waka'anni afqid sawabi indama araki.

JOKES

• HUSBAND (Angrily): What's that? "The meat is half-cooked!"
WIFE: "Very simple. You can eat the cooked half and leave the other."
• SERVANT (To her ill-looking lady): "There's a woman at the door who wants to see you."
"A woman? Is she beautiful and graceful?"
"No, Your Ladyship. She's just like you."
• HIND addressing her friend Nahed:
"HIND, I've seen your fiance entering the cinema accompanied by your friend Sue."
NAHED: "Yes, I've learnt that from Sue's fiance."

PUZZLES

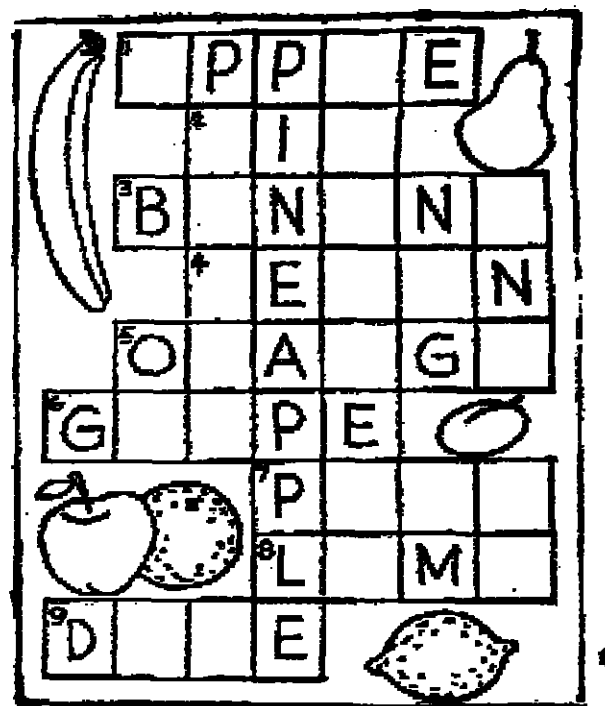
(A) ARITHMETICAL

WHAT NUMBERS ARE THESE?

1. The square of its half is the number reversed.
2. Its half, increased by its one-fifth, is equal to its one-fourth plus eighteen.
3. When increased by three and the result divided by two, the answer is twice the number.

(B) FRUIT SQUARES.

• Fill in the squares to name the fruits.



BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Name FOUR kinds of lilies used for food.
2. What food adds lime to the body?
3. To which country is coffee indigenous?
4. Is a peanut a nut?
5. What kind of grounds are edible?
6. Which foods are richest in iodine?
7. What are sweetbreads?

Hormones may point to pregnancy danger

LONDON (R) — British researchers said they may have found hormone tests that could warn doctors a woman is suffering from pre-eclampsia, a dangerous condition in pregnancy.

A team at Oxford University's John Radcliffe Hospital said inhibin A, activin A and pro-alpha-2-macroglobulin-inhibin complex (PAC) levels in the blood of pregnant women with pre-eclampsia were significantly higher than in women with normal pregnancies.

It can lead to eclampsia — seizures that can be fatal. It also creates a risk of premature birth and of small babies at risk of a variety of complications. The researchers said

in the Lancet medical journal, they said their findings could point to a test for the condition. Pre-eclampsia affects seven per cent of first-time mothers and can suddenly send a pregnant woman's blood pressure soaring to dangerously high levels.

U.S. researchers said they had discovered a defect in the placenta that could cause pre-eclampsia.

In a normal pregnancy, the placenta sends out into the uterine wall finger-like projections of cells, called cytotrophoblasts. They begin to mimic the cells that are found inside blood vessels, and eventually they break down the vessels, allowing the mother's blood to nourish the fetus and carry away waste.

But in pre-eclampsia, the placenta does not invade the uterus adequately and the cells do not manage to mimic blood vessels, the researchers at the University of California at San Francisco said.

Movie legend Katharine Hepburn turns 90



Actress Katharine Hepburn, shown in an undated file photo, does not want any fuss made over her 90th birthday (Reuters photo)

NEW YORK (AFP) — Hollywood legend Katharine Hepburn, whose tall, regal presence and tart tongue made her a movie favourite and four-time Oscar winner, celebrated Monday her 90th birthday.

Quick, smart and smacking of class, she was not averse to scandal during her heyday in Hollywood when she was romantically linked to billionaire Howard Hughes and the married actor Spencer Tracy and director John Ford.

The actress, whose last major hit was *On Golden Pond* in 1981, for which she won her last Oscar for best actress, had until recently been living in guarded privacy in New York City.

A small garden not far from her New York home where she lived from 1932 to 1966 was named after her Monday. Suffering from Parkinson's disease, she returned to her family home in Connecticut last year.

A tomboyish hellraiser as a child in Hartford, Connecticut, she went on to Bryn Mawr College with ambitions of becoming a doctor like her father but was

thwarted by poor grades in chemistry. She set her sights on the stage.

Born on May 12, 1907, her childhood ended when she was just 14 when she found the body of her adored brother Tom, two years older, hanging in his bedroom during a visit to his aunt in New York.

Her autobiography titled *Me: Stories Of My Life* only partially lifts the veil of Hepburn's life, notably her 20-year relationship with Tracy.

As an actress, her record is unparalleled. She is the only actress to have won four Oscars for best actress, starting with her role as a stage-struck tomboy in *Morning Glory* in 1933.

It was more than 30 years before she won her second Oscar for *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* with a dying Tracy in 1967, but during those years she gave her most memorable performances.

She won her third Oscar for her role as an scheming, shrewish Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine in *Lion In Winter* opposite Peter O'Toole in 1969.

Hepburn imbued her characters with her real-life upper-class aristocratic upbringing and clipped Yankee speech.

She played the straitlaced missionary's sister in *The African Queen* (1952) opposite the drunken river boat captain Humphrey Bogart and the society girl in *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) with Cary Grant.

After tangling with RKO Studio chiefs, she bought out her contract from them as well as the rights to *The Philadelphia Story*, thereby ensuring her financial future.

She sold the movie rights and her services to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer which in 1942 bought another property that she shared ownership of — *Woman Of The Year*, a film that marked the beginning of her long partnership with Tracy.

She married only once, to Ludlow Ogden Smith, a socially prominent Philadelphia. Their marriage lasted from 1928 to 1934 when she became persuaded that the institution of marriage was unnatural.

Hollywood films take back-door approach to faith

By Lynn Elber
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When it comes to movies, traditional religion generally doesn't have a prayer.

Few Hollywood films make religious themes central to their story. Casual references to worship or God are rarely included, even when their absence is strikingly odd.

Priests, nuns and rabbis are more likely to be charming or quirky characters (such as the eccentric nuns in *Sister Act*) or harsh figures (the sexually abusive priest in *Primal Fear*) than respected representatives of faith.

The devout, caring nun played by Susan Sarandon in *Dead Man Walking* and the film's religious complexity is the exception, not the rule.

And yet, observers say, some movies do manage to find a path to spirituality and moral high ground — even if the turf is conspicuously non-denominational.

"There is certainly less religious spirituality in films today," says Henry Herx, who has reviewed films for the U.S. Catholic Conference's Office of Film and Broadcasting for three decades and is the office's director.

"But that doesn't mean there are not films with deep spirituality in more general terms," he says. "The healthy aspect of moviegoing today is there are films that have something to say, something to offer the individual viewer."

He reels off examples: the Academy Award-nominated *Secrets And Lies*, about a family facing its hidden history, *The Spitfire Grill*, a parolee's efforts at rehabilitation, and the newly released *Paradise Road*, based on a true story of World War II female prisoners of war.

"There is no formal prayer, there's no formal discussion of religion or religious practices, but there is a deep spirituality which grows in the film, a need for cohesion and unity," Mr. Herx says of *Paradise Road*.

After all, just what is religion, asks the Rev. Ellwood Kieser, a member of Catholicism's Paulist Order, as well as a producer of such films as *Romero*, the story of slain El Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

"Is religion going to church and pious talk, God talk? Or is it reaching for the depths of the human situation and struggling to find meaning?" Rev. Kieser says.

By that definition, he says, Schindler's List and *Forrest Gump* join *Dead Man Walking* as profoundly religious films.

Which is not to say that leaders are satisfied seeing their faith left on the cutting room floor or viewed through a narrow lens.

Hollywood, although known as a secular community, does not shun religion entirely. The Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, has such outspoken admirers as Richard Gere and is the subject of Martin Scorsese's forthcoming drama *Kundun*.

Roseanne and other celebrities, including Diane Ladd and Dolly Parton, reportedly have studied Judaism's Kabbalah, described as a mystical approach to explaining creation and morality.

"I'm a Catholic Shiksa," Ladd recently told USA Today. "But I'm on a spiritual journey, and I believe we can learn from all religions."

Hollywood should embrace such expressions of faith on the big screen, says Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, a New York-

based writer and leader of the Los Angeles-area Synagogue for Performing Arts.

He acknowledges that the films *A Stranger Among Us* and *The Chosen* focused on Jewish characters. But both were about Hasidic Judaism, "the most obviously distinctive and colourful" branch, Rabbi Telushkin says.

Rarely are non-orthodox Jews shown, he says. Yet the vast majority of U.S. Jews are reform or conservative; only about 7 per cent are Orthodox, according to a 1990 study.

"I would like to see more accurate and powerful representations," the rabbi says. "Religion is clearly something that matters to an enormous number of people and it's important to see in movies."

Television, however, seems more receptive to strong religious themes. When producer David E. Kelley optioned Rabbi Telushkin's 1991 mystery novel, *An Eye For An Eye*, Kelley had a theatrical project in mind.

Studios, however, told Kelley that it was "a little too Jewish and not marketable enough," Rabbi Telushkin recounts. Kelley instead used the story in his new TV series *The Practice*.

With every studio movie representing a multimillion-dollar investment, there also is a palpable fear of controversy, especially when a film about a specific faith can draw protests even before completion.

In Brooklyn, residents angry about the depiction of their ultra-orthodox Jewish community in *A Price Below Rubies* chased the film crew out last month. All it took was one look at the sets and wardrobe; no one had actually seen a script.

Some films depict a vaguer, presumably safer spirituality. It's the kind that fueled Michael, the fluffy John Travolta tale about an angel come to Earth, and *Phenomenon*, also starring Travolta.

Gerald Dipego, who wrote *Phenomenon*'s story of a man miraculously endowed with vast intelligence, says studios are more likely to accept scripts that aren't overtly religious.

"If somebody said to a studio executive I have a script I want you to read and it's quite religious, they'd probably say, 'no, take it off my desk.' What's happening nowadays is if you use the word 'spiritual' you can maybe get over his fear," Mr. Dipego says.

Some critics, however, dismiss such films as reeking of eau de new age, a kind of faith lite.

They are superficial "Feel-Good" exercises, Hollywood's exploitation of America's growing quest for moral direction in difficult times, contends Mr. Herx.

Mr. Dipego defends *Phenomenon* as a legitimate exploration of faith that can appeal to a broader audience, especially young people. It was among the top 10 grossing films of 1996 with \$100 million-plus.

"I think religion translates into dogma," Mr. Dipego says. "When you say spiritual, it's this whole wide-ranging kind of philosophical idea that doesn't feel the same way."

'I don't miss catwalk' says would-be nun

VATICAN CITY (R) — A demure Italian blonde in a sensible suit and no make-up told a gathering of clerics at the Vatican last week that she was giving up her glamorous life as a fashion model to devote herself to God.

Antonella Moccia, 30, who is considering becoming a nun, presented two images of herself to a congress on religious vocations — before and after.

"I was the one you just saw," she told the audience after they had watched video clips showing her

sashaying down the catwalk in an array of couture clothes.

At one point, she appeared bare-shouldered in a bejewelled tiara, gaudy drop earrings and a low-cut dress.

"I have no regrets. I don't deny what I was before," said Moccia, one of four people chosen to explain their callings to the congress. "God is not...an alternative solution. God is love."

She added: "I don't live the life of glamour as before. I live a very normal life because I know I am in

God's will."

Moccia, a tall, slender woman who showed for designers including Laura Biagiotti and Trussardi under the stage name Hella, overcame apparent shyness and spoke with passion.

Her emotions overflowed when Pope John Paul greeted her at the end of the meeting. She kissed his ring and knelt for several seconds.

She seemed close to tears when the Pontiff, who was not present to watch her video, put his hand on her forehead to bless her.

The congress discussed how to make religious life attractive to young people who live in an increasingly material society and are reluctant to espouse the Catholic Church's strict rules on celibacy.

The number of priests fell by nearly 13 per cent between 1978 and 1994 and the number of nuns by 24 per cent, according to an official report released last October.

As well as Moccia, a former Ballerina, an accountant who has joined a seminary and a deacon whose four sons are all priests explained their reasons for embracing the church.

Nunzio Spinelli, the priest who first encouraged Moccia's vocation, told reporters earlier that he interviewed her several years ago for a Roman Catholic magazine on how, as a successful fashion model, she still had time for voluntary work.

He said he had left her with the following thought: "If God wanted you all for himself, what would you do?"

"She told me later that she had no peace of mind after that," Fr. Spinelli said. "Now she has found it in her vocation."

Moccia began working with the nuns from Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Missionaries of Charity order in a Rome convent, helping out at a soup kitchen and caring for the homeless.

She subsequently gave up



A file photo of Italian model Antonella Moccia, 30, who plans to become a nun, was chosen as one of four people to explain their callings at the delegates of a Vatican congress on Catholic vocations in Europe (Reuters photo)

naries of Charity order in a Rome convent, helping out at a soup kitchen and caring for the homeless.

She subsequently gave up

modelling altogether and Fr. Spinelli said she now wanted to join an order that helped young people.

She has not yet taken

vows but is preparing to live with a community of nuns to see if she is cut out for convent life.

Opium wars — the Chinese film industry fights back

By Giles Hewitt
Agence France Presse

SHANGHAI — "Look, it's not just about money! It's about setting the record straight."

Veteran Chinese film director Xie Jin underlines the point by slapping his hand down on the glossy brochure publicising his latest movie, *The Opium War* — a \$12-million epic starring the British government as arch-villain in the 1840 conflict that forced China to cede Hong Kong to the empire.

For all his protestations, Xie, one of China's most prominent directors, is willing to admit his film — due for general release on June 12 — is looking to seriously cash in on the return of the British colony to Chinese rule on July 1.

"The budget was high, but we had no problem

raising the money," he said.

"The return of Hong Kong is such an important event, and we always knew that if we got the timing right, we could sell the film around the world."

The 74-year-old director of 40 films that span a 50-year career has officially dedicated the film to the July 1 handover and was due to attend this week's Cannes Film Festival where he hopes to sell the movie to European and U.S. distributors.

It has already been sold to four South East Asian nations, as well as Japan and South Korea.

Marketing bonanzas like Cannes are crucial if the film is to recoup its cost, which is astronomical compared to the average \$300,000 budget for most mainland Chinese films. The *Opium War* took se-

ven months to make, with more than 50,000 extras, 20,000 costumes and the construction of 47 period sailing ships.

Chinese studios have made films about the *Opium War* before, but Xie is adamant his version is leagues ahead of its predecessors, with their red-wigged Chinese actors playing the evil British parliamentarians.

"This is not about heroes, it is about the war itself, its true causes and the suffering it inflicted on the Chinese people," Xie said of the film, whose cast includes several British actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre.

The 1840 war was sparked when Lin Enzu, a special envoy of the Qing emperor, ordered the burning of imported opium in a bid to end the British-led

trade in the drug.

British naval retaliation forced open Chinese ports for opium imports and also resulted in the ceding of Hong Kong to British rule.

Xie first came up with the idea for the film three years ago, after watching Steven Spielberg's Oscar-winning epic, *Schindler's List*.

"It left a very deep impression and I felt some-

what sad that China seemed unable to make a high-quality historical film that could carry the same sort of emotional weight."

Xie is fiercely defensive towards charges he has produced a 150-minute piece of gung-ho propaganda, and stresses the film received no state funding.

In financing terms, *The Opium War* marks a watershed, being the first mainland film produced by a

holding company especially set up for the purpose, and using only domestic, private investors.

The main shareholders in the *Opium War* Film and TV Creation and Production Co. Ltd. are Xie's own private production house, the Sichuan Chengdu Huitong City United Bank and Shanghai Jingwen Investment Co.

"Reform in the Chinese film industry has been extremely slow in coming, and we wanted to try and pioneer a new way of financing domestic productions," Xie said.

However, film industry sources suggest Mr. Xie's claims to have worked without state support are disingenuous to say the least.

"It's known that (Chinese President) Jiang Zemin personally gave the nod to this film and specif-

ically requested that the government offer financial support, with funds disseminated through the state film development board," one well-informed source said.

Xie's films have never courted official disfavour, and he is considered a very "safe" director by the Chinese authorities.

Xie, however, rejects any suggestion he has been co-opted and also dismisses concerns the emotional denunciation of Britain and other foreign powers in his film might damage its overseas marketability.

"You would have to be a very narrow-minded and little person to be offended by what this film says," he snorted.

"I'm not sure that (Chinese President) Jiang Zemin personally gave the nod to this film and specif-

Altitude sickness — bugs that can strike at 35,000 feet

By Gavin Evans

LONDON — When television cameraman Jonathan Partridge boarded a flight from London to Cape Town, he thought he had a fair idea of what to expect. Rubbery chicken, crying babies, stiff neck, fatigue — at worst a bumpy ride.

Having spent a decade filming some of the world's most volatile trouble spots, the bout of flu he had contracted from his daughter a day earlier hardly seemed sufficient to put him off his trip. His wife, a doctor, reassured him by saying he always shook these things off in a day or two — so he buckled up for what he hoped would not be a bad flight.

But towards the end of his journey his condition deteriorated alarmingly.

"My temperature shot up (to more than 105 degrees Fahrenheit)," he recalls. "Then I felt icy cold and

shivery, and by the time the plane landed, I felt like death. I could hardly move."

He was examined by a doctor who said he was the seventh person from that flight complaining of symptoms of "severe influenza." A day later, when he could no longer stand, a specialist diagnosed pneumonia, and, after hospital treatment and tests, he was found to have Legionnaires' disease.

The sometimes-fatal strain of pneumonia was named after it led to the deaths of several members of the American Legion attending a convention in a Philadelphia hotel in 1976. The Legionella bacteria can be spread through water droplets from air conditioning systems.

Partridge, who took six weeks to recover, believes the aircraft was responsible. "The specialists told me my defence mechanisms were run down when I got on the flight because of the flu, and that made me sus-

ceptible to Legionella. The theory is that these organisms were spread through the filtration system."

Representatives of airlines and aircraft manufacturers say it is "virtually impossible" for filtration systems to spread disease. Dick Kenny, public relations officer for Boeing, points out that airlines use a "high efficiency particle airtight" system, which is "very efficient in trapping micro-particles such as bacteria and viruses. Ninety-nine per cent of airborne microbes are captured."

That still leaves one per cent, although he believes the systems are as safe as those used in hospital operating theatres.

Independent researchers agree that the risk of serious illness being spread through aircraft filtration systems is low, although they do not discount the possibility.

But they point to the danger of disease spreading bet-

ween people sitting close to each other. In a recent United States example, several passengers and crew contracted tuberculosis. It was found that the probable cause was the proximity of those infected to a carrier.

Unless every passenger is given a medical examination before boarding, the problem may remain.

Tracey Meaker, a representative of Virgin Atlantic, places the onus on the integrity of the passengers, saying: "We always expect (they) will make us aware of

any medical conditions they might have which could be dangerous."

David Snelling, of British Airways (BA), points out that it is against the law to travel with a contagious disease, and notes that staff sometimes spot it. He stresses that reported incidents have involved passengers two or three rows behind or in front of the carrier, "but there is really no more danger of this in an aircraft than anywhere else."

However, Professor John Spengler, a health scientist

from Harvard University in the U.S. who specialises in researching the air in planes, disagrees.

"Aircraft pack large numbers of people into extremely confined spaces," he says. "There is no other environment where people are in such close proximity for so long, sharing the same air, so it is far easier for disease to spread."

In addition, people suffering from apparently minor illnesses can place their health at greater risk by flying. In one case, a fit young clergyman with no history of cardiac disease had a fatal heart attack on a short flight. He had been suffering from flu, and the cause of death was found to be a combination of this and changes in air pressure.

Spengler wants people to be made more aware of such potential hazards. "There is very little acclimatisation in the rapid ascent from the ground to high altitudes,

and this may lead to a deprivation of oxygen because of the pressure change, which could be dangerous for those suffering from lung disease."

Far more common are the temporary ill-effects of the dry, "scrubbed" air in aeroplanes. In most large aircraft, 50 per cent of the air is recycled — a money-saving measure introduced during the fuel crisis in the 1970s. Along with time changes and long spells without moving, this may be a factor in jet lag and can cause eye, nose and skin irritation.

There may be other, hidden health hazards from air travel. Spengler cites the results of recent American research suggesting that pilots, crew and frequent flyers are at risk from exposure to high-altitude radiation on long flights, which can be 100 times higher than at ground level. In addition, the intrusion of ozone can occur at greater

than recommended safety levels.

Safety experts also point out that planes can present defecation dangers.

They have been known to deposit their sewage as "blue ice" on the world below. If airline lavatory-tank valves leak, ice can form on the outside, and when the plane descends into warmer air to land, the ice falls to the ground, sometimes smashing into buildings. Britain's Civil Aviation Authority tries to trace the aircraft responsible so the fault can be rectified. About 10 cases of "blue ice" are reported over the country annually, out of nearly four million flights.

But whatever the risks — not forgetting that terrorist attacks, human errors and mechanical failures can be deadly — planes remain by far the most convenient, and probably the safest, means of long-distance public transport. — Gemini News.

Scientists probe HRT in biggest study of women

By Maggie Fox
Reuter

LONDON — British cancer researchers said they were looking into the effects of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) in the biggest study of women's health ever undertaken.

They said their survey of one million women would answer questions about whether HRT caused breast cancer, protected against heart disease and whether there was any difference between HRT drugs.

"One of the main concerns about HRT has been whether it has an effect on breast cancer," Dr. Valerie Beral, head of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's Cancer Epidemiology Unit, told a news conference.

There is clear evidence that HRT helps prevent osteoporosis, the weakening of the bones that often comes with age. There is also clear evidence that it can add to an increase in blood clots and cancer of the uterus.

But HRT greatly diminishes some of the worst symptoms of the menopause such as mood swings, hot flushes and, more serious, the increasing tendency for women to show "male" patterns of sickness such as higher rates of heart disease.

Dr. Beral said HRT did not have major effects on cancer and heart disease. "We do know there's absolutely nothing drastic going on one way or another," she said.

The trouble is that HRT can make the breasts of menopausal women look "younger." After menopause breasts are filled with fat that is easy to see through, but

before, and with HRT, glands are active and often look opaque to mammograms.

For screeners, this makes it harder to detect tumours in the breasts of women taking HRT.

Julietta Patrick, national coordinator of the NHS breast screening programme, said 1.5 million women aged 50 to 64 were invited each year for breast cancer screening each year in Britain.

"They often ask us questions related to HRT and potential links to breast cancer," she said. "Unfortunately, we don't know the answers to the questions they ask."

All these women would be given a questionnaire about HRT, with detailed questions about which type they used, if any, and other health factors such as weight, smoking and drinking.

Dr. Beral said some surprising findings had already emerged.

"We found to our surprise that one in three of women being screened was taking HRT," she said, adding that HRT use had probably more than doubled since 1990 in Britain.

Dr. Beral estimated a study of one million women would turn up 6,000 cases of breast cancer and 6,000 heart deaths by 2001 — enough to determine what links, if any, there were with HRT.

"We'll certainly have enough figures to come up with fairly definitive results by 1999," she said.

To date the largest study has been an ongoing survey of 100,000 nurses in the United States, which covers a wide range of health issues.

Gene linked to Down's syndrome

BERKELEY, California (R) — California researchers said they had identified a major genetic factor contributing to mental retardation in people with Down's syndrome.

Working with mice bred to carry segments of human chromosome 21 in their DNA, scientists at the Ernest Orlando Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley linked learning deficits to the gene DYRK.

Any deviation from the normal complement of two copies of this gene appears to impair the ability to learn, the researchers said.

The findings of the researchers, led by Edward Rubin and Desmond Smith, geneticists with the Berkeley

Lab's Life Sciences Division, were published in the May 1 edition of the scientific journal Nature Genetics.

"Our work suggests that you need exactly two copies of DYRK for normal development," Dr. Rubin, who heads biology research for the lab's Human Genome Centre, said in a statement.

Down's syndrome occurs in about one of every 800 newborns, with the incidence increasing markedly in the children born to women over 35, the Berkeley Lab said. It is the leading genetic cause of mental retardation and is associated with a shorter-than-average life expectancy of 55 years, it said.

Most people with Down's

syndrome carry a complete extra copy of chromosome 21 in all of their cells. But there are rare forms of Down's syndrome in which only part of chromosome 21 is present in triplicate.

Dr. Smith and Dr. Rubin bred a series of mice containing different adjacent segments of human chromosome 21.

To identify which gene was responsible for mental retardation, they assessed the learning and memory skills of their genetically altered mice using a standardised test.

The strain of mouse that performed most poorly on the test carried a human DYRK gene in addition to a pair of mouse DYRK genes, the researchers found. They

also said that DYRK is almost identical to a fruit fly gene that also plays a role in learning.

"Obviously a large leap of faith must be taken to equate learning in flies to that in humans," Dr. Rubin said.

However, the corresponding findings in both flies and mice... support the idea that altered expression of this gene (DYRK) may be an important contributor to the learning deficits in humans with Down syndrome," he said.

The Berkeley Lab is a U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratory managed by the University of California.

Researchers: Grandma was right — bundle up

LONDON (R) — People who live in warmer climates may be more likely to die in cold weather — because they fail to bundle up, European researchers said.

The Eurwinter Group, coordinated by physiologist Bill Keatinge of Queen Mary and Westfield College in London, found that the warmer the climate, the more likely people were to succumb to heart attacks and strokes. There are several reasons — the cold can make it easier for blood to clot and cardiovascular reflexes to the cold can trigger death.

The rise in respiratory deaths is explained by the dampening effect cold has on the immune system, the greater risk of catching something from others in

Lancet medical journal.

For example in Athens, the number of deaths from all causes rose by 2.15 per cent for every degree the temperature fell below 18C (64F) while in Finland deaths increased by only 0.27 per cent.

It is known that more people die when it is cold, mostly from heart attacks and strokes. There are several reasons — the cold can make it easier for blood to clot and cardiovascular reflexes to the cold can trigger death.

The rise in respiratory deaths is explained by the dampening effect cold has on the immune system, the greater risk of catching something from others in

crowded indoor spaces and the better ability of bacteria to survive in droplets in the cold.

Mr. Keatinge's group, which included researchers in Finland, Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Greece and Germany, found direct associations between death rates on cold days and climate, low temperatures in the home, low proportions of people wearing hats, gloves and warm coats, and shivering at 7 degrees C (45F).

For instance, on a cold day a Greek person's house is likely to be colder than a Finn's because Greeks are less likely to have heat, they noted.

"Although we know that the middle-aged and elderly

should wear protective clothing and keep active in cold, weather outdoors, our surveys show that in relatively warm countries they often fail to do so," they added.

Ami Sperber and Shimon Weitzman of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel said more study was needed as it was not clear why people in warmer climates failed to bundle up on cold days. It could just be they are too poor to spend money on coats.

"Grandma may recognise the danger of cold exposure, but she still has to learn how to get her message across more effectively," they wrote in a commentary.

Safety of antihistamines reviewed after report

LONDON (R) — Swedish doctors added to warnings about antihistamines Friday, saying that several non-drowsy hay fever medicines could have dangerous side-effects.

They said the drugs Astemizole and Loratadine also showed markedly high rates of sudden cardiac death and other reactions.

The drugs named in the Swedish report serve mainly as alternatives to Terfenadine, which was the first prescription antihistamine to relieve hay fever symptoms without causing drowsiness but is now having its use restricted because of concerns about its safety.

Britain's Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) said last week it was recommending that Terfenadine be available on prescription only after the Health Department said 14 people had died after taking it since 1982.

Studies have found serious and sometimes fatal cardiac irregularities can result if the drug is used improperly — if taken with certain other medications or by patients with liver disease.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said earlier this year it would withdraw approval of products using Terfenadine.

France, Luxembourg and Greece are taking similar action.

In view of this, Ralph Edwards and Marie Lindquist at the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for International Drug Monitoring, Uppsala, Sweden, reviewed data from 17 countries on reported side-effects from five non-sedating antihistamine drugs including terfenadine.

The drugs collectively caused an increased risk of heart abnormalities and death, although this increase was very small.

The drugs were Terfenadine, Loratadine, Cetirizine, Astemizole and Acrivastine. All are used in hay fever compounds made by a variety of companies.

Astemizole is already under close review in Britain.

"The data indicate that some of the alternatives to Terfenadine may have similar problems, suggesting that thorough consideration of the comparative benefit risk profile of all non-sedating antihistamines is wise," Dr. Edwards and Dr. Lindquist wrote in a letter to the Lancet medical journal.

"The CSM needs to keep a close eye on all non-sedating antihistamines," the Lancet said in a commentary.

ANSWERS PUZZLES

(A) ARITHMETICAL

1. Eighteen.
2. Forty.
3. One.

(B) FRUIT SQUARES

1. Apple.
2. Fig.
3. Banana.
4. Lemon or Melon.
5. Orange.
6. Grape.
7. Plum or Pear.
8. Lime.
9. Date.

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

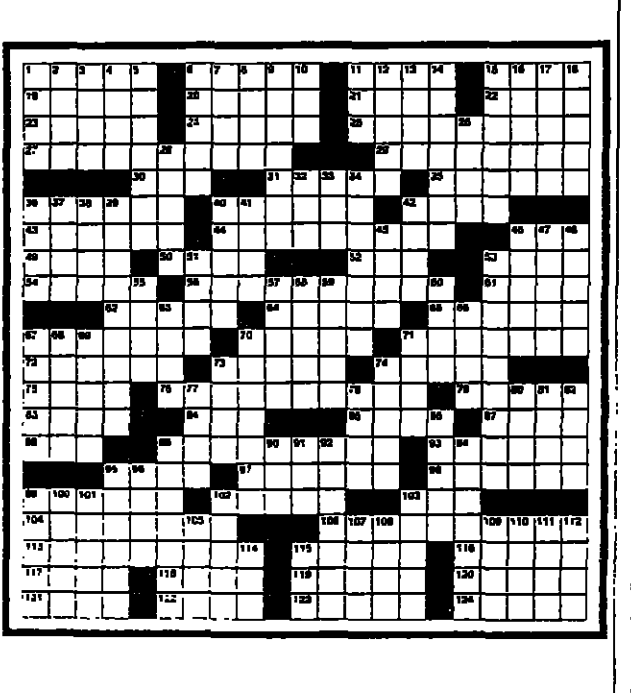
1. Onions, garlic, shallots, chives.
2. Milk.
3. Abyssinia (Currently Ethiopia).
4. No, it is not a true nut, but belongs to the same family as the pea and the bean.
5. Pumpkin, squash, cucumber, melon.
6. Salt water fish and shellfish.
7. Pancreas or thymus gland of a calf or other animal.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

DONE WITH EASE
By Chuck Deedene

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 2. Emancipated
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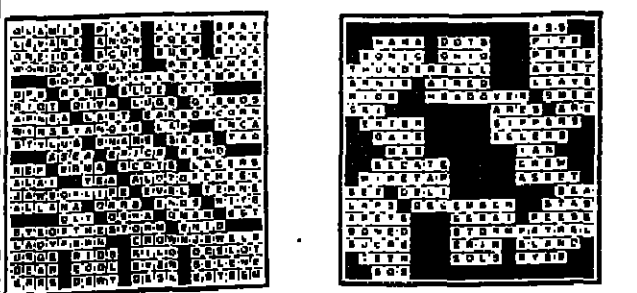
Diagramless, 21x21
By Roger Coburn

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- CRYPTOGRAMS
1. When told the soldiers come in formation, we get information apropos of their marching positions.
 2. Prudish spinster coyly flirts with macho chimney sweep who had come to clean her flue.
 3. Quaint squire quietly quaffed a quart of roguish liquor. He got quite queasy, so quit the iniquitous liquid.
 4. Girl sent pail of pills to her pen pal for his pet pig.

SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE



IBM predicts future with market in mind

By Josephine Ng
Reuters

SINGAPORE — The scientific and computing communities waited with bated breath as IBM's supercomputer Deep Blue battled chess champion Gary Kasparov in a rematch of brains against chip-power.

At stake could have been the answer to the question of whether a computer can really think and learn. Kasparov suffered a shock defeat in the first round of the match last year but eventually emerged the winner.

This time, armed with twice the speed and calculation capacity as before, Deep Blue has held Kasparov to two consecutive draws after a win for Kasparov and a resignation, with the six-game match drawn at two points each.

The last two games shed light on whether a computer with the ability to analyse 200 million chess positions a second can outwit the skills and creativity of the human brain.

For IBM — International Business Machines Corp — the Deep Blue project may bring the science fiction future closer to the market.

"There is value in the research. If a computer can really learn, will it mean I will have a computer in the house one day that can become upset with me?"

Claudia Muncie, IBM's senior manager of business programmes, said.

Ms. Muncie was in Singapore in April with several staff of IBM's research division.

Eye on market viability
IBM, which prides itself on being a technology leader, is in fact paying more attention to market demand in its research. And it has recently instituted ways to ensure better returns.

It started its "first-of-a-kind" (Foak) programme 18 months ago which aims to zoom in on "never been attempted before" technology.

Foak research must prove its market viability in less than a year on a budget of \$2 million.

"It is something IBM can replicate to make it a mainstream offering," Ms. Muncie said.

Foak takes up some 15-20 per cent of IBM's research budget. Research is about 15 per cent of its total research and development budget (RAD), which itself is five per cent of revenues.

Based on 1996 revenues of \$75.9 billion, research takes up about \$570 million out of the total \$3.8 billion RAD spent.

IBM said its fastest growing area of research was in industry solutions.

This is where IBM "couple with leading edge customers, working with them to package existing technologies in the labs and then deliver the solutions to them", Ms. Muncie said.

"Customer interactions help us set a significant part of our research agenda. Their visits help us give an outward, market-oriented

focus," Paul Horn, IBM's senior vice president of research said in the company's own research magazine.

Prototypes in the works that are almost certain to make it to market are Hotvideo and Panoramix, fuelled by market needs as a result of the Internet boom.

Hotvideo links digital video to text. The user can download video from the Internet and, by clicking on indicators on the images, can pull out information. The user can continue to watch the video or freeze the image.

Panoramix gives 360-degree images on web sites so users can explore a building's interior.

IBM is demonstrating Panoramix's potential for online commerce with a virtual tour of a Paris department store, where the user can visit any floor and get details on individual merchandise with a simple mouse click.

Network computing and human behaviour

The network computing age has also raised the importance of seeking ways to handle security issues and new ways to exploit networks.

"Basic research has moved from a focus on chemistry, physics and biological sciences to include more mathematical sciences and computing science. This is because of the change of industry towards networking."

"More exploratory work is being done in Internet, network than previously," said David Yoon, IBM's media manager, research communications.

IBM is trying to come up with other ways that use and emulate human behaviour as well.

IBM is currently experimenting with its personal area network (PAN) prototype, which uses humans as modems to transmit data between two electronic devices.

The PAN technology raised eyebrows when it was demonstrated in Singapore, although IBM researchers assured everybody the current passed through the body was too small to do any harm.

It was started three years ago by Thomas Zimmerman, who now works for IBM.

PAN has potential commercial use already and IBM envisages it being used to pass simple data between devices carried by two people, such as electronic business cards, during a handshake.

A person could wear a thin device and a telephone company or a bank's computer could authenticate the person's particulars and record transactions without the person having to key in any identification codes.

IBM is working on some issues and it is not known yet whether PAN will actually make it to market, Mr. Yoon said.

Another area of research includes study into how to carry a computer on the body and use it in a way that is not unsociable.

By Anita Snow
The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — The United States and Mexico claim they have stopped pointing fingers and now confess that both nations share the blame for the countries' illegal drug problem.

The United States — the world's largest consumer of illegal drugs — admits that demand is a big part of the equation. Mexico acknowledges that it must do more to stem the trafficking that feeds that demand.

Following President Bill Clinton's recent visit to Mexico City comes the hard part: turning platitudes into a successful strategy that puts Mexican drug barons behind bars.

Those familiar with the neighbouring nations' battle against drug trafficking are cheered by the promises of a coordinated war on drugs but are reserving judgment until they see concrete results.

"These agreements are

Mexico, U.S. face challenge of forging united war on drugs

great but they must be followed up with actions," said Phil Jordan, a retired U.S. drug agent and former director of the El Paso Intelligence Center, which tracks the Mexican drug lords.

The countries must go after the leaders of the Mexican drug trade, Mr. Jordan said. "That is the only way to make an impact."

U.S. and Mexican officials argued and traded accusations for months before agreeing during Mr. Clinton's visit to unite in their fight against illegal drugs, an evil that both sides admit threatens their nations' security.

The two leaders signed a pact to devise a common strategy by year's end that contains 16 specific objectives, including a pledge to

negotiate a temporary extradition of Mexican drug suspects wanted in the United States.

"The battle against drugs must unite our people, not divide them," Mr. Clinton told the Mexican people.

Top officials of both nations, led by U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey and Mexican Attorney General Jorge Madrazo, released a 97-page report identifying the threats trafficking poses for both countries.

The report said drug use in the United States is declining but Americans still consume nearly \$50 billion in drugs annually.

The use of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines and marijuana by those between the ages of 12 and 21 is rising.

"While the United States

has one of the greatest problems of drug abuse in the world, Mexico has grown to be one of the world's most significant drug-producing and transit countries," the joint assessment says. "Both countries are affected by illicit drug abuse, traffic and production, drug-related violence, and other associated criminal activities such as money laundering and the illicit arms trade."

The statement was a switch for Mexico, which has long joined other Latin American nations in criticising the United States for blaming countries that produce and smuggle drugs while ignoring its own consumption problems.

Mexicans were outraged earlier this year when members of the U.S. Congress

waged an acrimonious but unsuccessful drive to strip Mexico of its status as an ally in the drug war — and of the funds accompanying that status.

Those opposed to certifying Mexico latched onto the February arrest of Mexico's drug czar, Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, who was charged with taking bribes from the country's top cocaine trafficker.

Mexico announced an overhaul of its troubled anti-drug programme just days before Mr. Clinton's arrival. New agents will undergo drug and psychological tests as well as the kind of extensive background, financial and polygraph tests required of U.S. drug agents.

During Clinton's visit, U.S. officials offered \$6 million

to help pay for that training. They also pledged technical assistance to Mexico to halt the flow of guns smuggled from the United States and to fight drug money laundering.

The United States will provide Spanish-language computer software kits to help Mexicans trace smuggled weapons. Mexican officials every month seize some 10,000 illegal weapons, many of them ak-47 assault rifles.

As for money laundering, Mexico's treasury department is conducting 202 investigations — 57 of them jointly with the United States — and is now using a computerized system like that of its American counterparts.

The presidents also vowed to start negotiating a temporary extradition pact that would allow suspects to be tried in both countries before completing sentence in either country. The aim is to avoid delays in trying the cases.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A LARGE CHEMICAL COMPANY ESTABLISHED IN JORDAN REQUIRES CANDIDATES MEETING THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS TO FILL UP VARIOUS POSITIONS DURING THE COURSE OF 1997.

ATTRACTIVE SALARY PACKAGE WILL BE OFFERED TO SUITABLE CANDIDATES

QUALIFIED CANDIDATES NEED TO SEND DETAILED C.V. WITH RECENT PHOTO TO

P.O. BOX 926787 AMMAN 11110

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE RECEIVED BEFORE MAY 30, 1997

ALL APPLICATIONS WILL BE TREATED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

GENERAL:

- ONLY JORDANIAN NATIONALS NEED APPLY.
- POSITIONS ARE OPEN FOR MALE CANDIDATES ONLY.
- UPPER AGE LIMIT IS 40 YEARS.
- FLUENCY IN ARABIC AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES IS A MUST.
- KNOWLEDGE OF PC OPERATION WILL BE AN ADDED QUALIFICATION.

S.NO.	CATEGORY OF MANPOWER	NO. OF PERSONAL	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	JOB EXPERIENCE
1	CATEGORY -A MANAGER (MECH. MAINT)	1	DEGREE IN MECH. ENGG	MINIMUM 9 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN CHEMICAL /FERTILIZER PLANTS MAINTENANCE.
1	CATEGORY -B- ENGINEERS ENGINEERS - MECHANICAL	3	DEGREE IN MECH. ENGG	MINIMUM 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN CHEMICAL /FERTILIZER PLANTS MAINTENANCE
2	ENGINEER- CONDITION MONITORING	1	DEGREE IN MECH. ENGG	MINIMUM 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN CONDITION MONITORING OF PROCESS PLANT EQUIPMENT, METALLURGY, CORROSION ANALYSIS, BALANCING, NDT METHODS, INSPECTION OF WELDING, VESSELS, BOILERS, HEAT EXCHANGERS ETC. PREPARATION OF C.M SCHEDULES, COMPUTER LITERACY IS A MUST.
3	ENGINEER - INSTRUMENTS	2	DEGREE IN ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATION ENGG. / DEGREE IN INSTRUMENTATION & PROCESS CONTROL ENGG.	MINIMUM 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN CHEMICAL OR PETROCHEMICAL OR FERTILIZER INDUSTRY.
1	CATEGORY -C- SUPERVISORS / FOREMEN MECHANICAL	6	DIPLOMA IN MECH. - ENGG.	MIN 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN PETROCHEMICAL AND FERTILIZER PLANTS MAINTENANCE
2	ELECTRICAL	3	DIP. IN ELECT. & ELECTRONICS ENGG.	MIN 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN A CHEMICAL OR PETROCHEMICAL OR FERTILIZER INDUSTRY.
3	INSTRUMENTATION	2	DIP. IN ELECTRONICS & COMM. ENGG. / DIP. IN INSTRUMENTATION ENGG.	MIN. OF 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN A CHEMICAL OR PETROCHEMICAL OR FERTILIZER INDUSTRY.
4	LABORATORY	2	BACHELOR DEGREE IN CHEMISTRY	MIN. OF 5 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN ANALYSIS OF WATER, ACIDS AND VARIOUS CHEMICALS, VARIOUS TITRATION METHODS, pH/ CONDUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT, PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS RAW MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS. EXPOSURE TO UV SPECTROPHOTOMETER, AAS, GAS CHROMOTOGRAPH.
1	CATEGORY D: TECHNICIANS MECHANICAL	21	DIPLOMA IN MECH. ENGG. / MECH. TRADE CERTIFICATE	MIN 3 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN PETROCHEMICAL & FERTILIZER PLANTS MAINTENANCE
2	ELECTRICAL	9	DIP. IN ELECT. & ELECTRONICS ENGG.	MIN 3 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN A CHEMICAL OR PETROCHEMICAL OR FERTILIZER INDUSTRY IN MAINTENANCE OF ELECT. SYSTEMS.
3	INSTRUMENTATION	6	DIP. IN ELECTRONICS ENGG. / INST.	MINIMUM 3 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN A CHEMICAL OR PETROCHEMICAL OR FERTILIZER INDUSTRY.
4	LABORATORY	5	BACHELOR DEGREE IN CHEMISTRY	MINIMUM 3 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN ANALYSIS OF WATER, ACIDS, AND VARIOUS TITRATION METHODS, pH/CONDUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT, PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS RAW MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS. EXPOSURE TO UV SPECTROPHOTOMETER, AAS, GAS CHROMOTOGRAPH.
5	INSPECTION	2	DIPLOMA IN MECH. ENGG.	MIN 3 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN DATA COLLECTION FOR CONDITION MONITORING, NDT METHODS LIKE DP, UT, X-RAY, EXPOSURE TO VIBRATION AND SPM MEASURING INSTRUMENTS, WELDING INSPECTION, VESSEL, HEAT EXCHANGERS INSPECTION.

Suit claims non-Orthodox conversions not accepted in Israel

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israeli government is refusing to recognise non-Orthodox conversions to Judaism carried out abroad, despite the assurances of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to a lawsuit filed in the Supreme Court.

The petition was filed Tuesday on behalf of two Israeli families whose adopted babies were converted by Reform rabbis in London. Israel's Interior Ministry refused to recognise the con-

versions, the lawsuit says.

One of the families said they had first tried to have the baby converted by Orthodox rabbis in Israel, but they refused unless the parents — who are secular — promised to bring him up according to traditional Jewish law.

Alisa Inbari, a spokeswoman for the Interior Ministry, said conversions by people who make quick trips overseas to get them are under examination and "not acceptable at the moment."

Jordan's contracting sector in recession, president of the association says

By Tanya Habjouqa and Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Contractors Association (JCA) Tuesday held a meeting to discuss the low volume of work plaguing contractors and highlighted the need for improvements. JCA officials said.

JCA President Wael Toukan estimated that out of 1,200 JCA members, only 500 were employed.

"We cannot hide the fact that most of our contractors are out of work," Mr. Toukan said, "but we hope that future projects from the private sector will boost business."

However, such projects would not be enough to solve the problem, he said.

He further expressed astonishment that private and major public shareholding companies are tendering projects requiring the participation of foreign companies and firms not involved in the contractors business.

"We hope that the concerned authorities will rectify this irregularity," he said.

He demanded the implementation of article eight of JCA law which stipulates that contractors be classified and registered at the association.

"The contracting sector employs 13 per cent of the workforce and contributes 10 per cent of the gross national product," Mr. Toukan said.

He requested that all construction projects be returned to the Ministry

of Public Works and Housing, particularly projects belonging to the ministries of health and education.

He called for the establishment of major contracting firms in order to compete with foreign companies, thereby allowing contractors to obtain foreign expertise and outside projects.

Other proposals included that local contractors specialise in order to allow technology to flourish in the Kingdom, that foreign labourers remain until replacements are found, and for the simplification of classification procedures.

Mr. Toukan touched upon the problems of late payments of contracts undertaken for the government, saying that

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali had promised that all debts will be paid within one month.

"No projects should be tendered when sufficient funds are not available," he said.

Mr. Toukan was referring to the recent battle to procure JD 15 million in late payments from the Jordan Water Authority (JWA).

During a past interview with the Jordan Times, a JWA official disclosed that funds earmarked for contractor payment with the Ministry of Finance had instead repaid JWA foreign loans.

"The matter has been cleared, the JWA has repaid all of its current debt," a JCA official said.

U.S. eyeing U.N. budget cuts at WHO, ILO

GENEVA (AFP) — The United States is eyeing budget cuts of up to 10 per cent at two large Geneva-based international agencies, a key U.S. official has said here.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) "have

room for considerable improvements" in efficiency "that would result in room for reducing their budgets," Princeton

Lyman, U.S. assistant secretary of state for international affairs told journalists.

"We estimate that between five and 10 per

cent reductions are possible in these specialised agencies without having a detrimental impact on their programmes," he said, adding that in New York headquarters, the room for increased efficiency was "far greater than people had anticipated."

The U.S. is pushing for further U.N. budget-cutting, even though it is owes the organisation nearly \$1.5 billion.

Washington is aiming to cut its U.N. contribution to 20 per cent of the total budget from the current 25 per cent, Mr. Lyman said.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's important today you pay more attention to your home. Get the furniture in better order and add some art. Later this evening you can seek out the advice of fellow associates for you to complete any new projects.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be more thoughtful today of others' well-being when handling your correspondence, however, not at your own expense. This evening can be spent with your loved ones at home relaxing and recharging your batteries.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Go over your accounts today well before you complain to others about them. Build up your bank account for a rainy day and thereby you will have sufficient funds. Later this evening you can meet with fellow associates.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Your ideas today to gain your cherished desires may be incorrect at first, however, later you use the right ones. Tonight will be good for you to consult with knowledgeable people and devise a good course of action.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You don't understand how to get rid of a concern today, however, it will work out. Show more thought and kindness for your loved ones and do some special activity which indicate that you truly do appreciate them being around.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Clarify your wishes in mentality today, so try not to criticise your friends and accept them as they are. Later this evening will be good for you to seek out the advice of a bigwig and ask him or her for some good suggestions.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A home affair

today has to be handled before you go out to responsibilities in the business world. Later this evening will be good for you to go out on the town with close friends and have a wonderful time together.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Concentrate today on new interests which can bring you greater progress in the days ahead. Tonight will be a good time for you to show that you do appreciate your loved ones, by doing something special for them.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Analyse a situation today carefully where your mate is concerned and you can be romantically happier. Later this evening will be good for discussing with fellow associates your ideas on how to make your career activities better.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The situation concerning a close friend could upset you today, so make every effort to study all the angles involved with all career activities. Study a public affair well before you take any action to determine its validity.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take care you do not leave important duties undone today, or you could lose out where it counts most. This evening can be spent with your loved ones at home and just relax for the pressures of business activities in the days ahead.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may find it difficult today to enjoy yourself until evening comes, so get busy at the practical during the daytime. Tonight will be good for you to meet with knowledgeable people and determine the best course of action to take.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

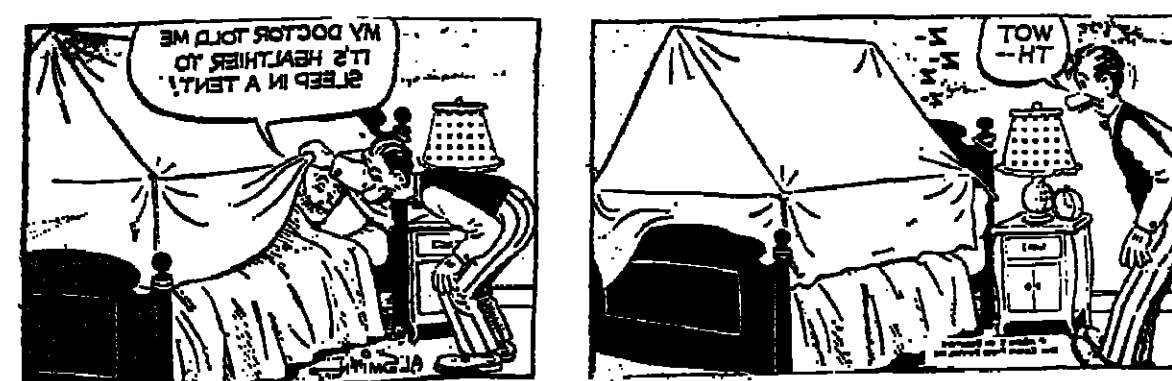
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR
US Dollar	-	1.6967	0.6089	1.4370	117.80	1.3877	1.0713	1.9088	5.7181
DE Mark	0.5894	-	0.3585	0.6469	69.45	0.8177	0.8451	1.1245	3.3679
GB Sterling	1.6423	2.7890	-	2.3609	194.04	2.2790	2.746.23	3.1352	9.3911
CH Franc	0.6959	1.1759	0.4233	-	81.96	0.9650	1.162.22	132.77	3.9741
JP Yen	0.0085	1.4391	0.5161	1.2188	-	1.1770	14.18	181.83	4.8472
CA Dollar	0.7206	1.2215	0.4411	1.0347	1.15	-	1206.40	1.3733	4.1158
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0147	0.3639	0.8859	1420.56	0.8299	-	11.41	3.4178
NL Guilder	0.5241	0.8839	0.3188	75.31	61.70	0.7259	875.54	-	2.9936
FR Franc	0.1750	0.2968	0.1065	25.1356	20.59	0.2427	33.37	33.3700	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.8402	0.3027	3.6728	1638.00	3.3850
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	0.5324	5.1415	0.4276	5.1876	2172.32	4.7811	-
GB Sterling	0.2686	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0807	0.98	410.08	0.9025
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8751	0.9481	-	9.68	0.8031	9.74	4079.90	3.9795
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0832	1.01	422.50	0.9299
Kuwait Dinar	3.3033	2.3387	1.2389	1.2452	12.02	-	12.13	5080.43	9.9289
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1920	1.0212	1.0106	0.9911	0.0824	-	418.75	0.9216
Lebanese L1000	0.68	0.4603	2.4388	0.2451	2.3668	0.1968	2.3880	-	2.2009
Egyptian	0.2954	0.2092	1.1080	0.1114	1.0754	0.0894	1.0850	454.38	-

Energy									
Oil	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR
Brent	19.40	19.90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WTI	20.85	21.05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bonny	19.40	19.90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dubai	18.35	18.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UL Gas	0.00	182.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4525	0.16228	0.38342	31.4357	-	-	-	-
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46206	0.16572	0.39153	32.1007	-	-	-	-
KW Dinar	3.3033	5.80538	2.01045	4.75059	389.408	-	-	-	-
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.50248	1.61447	3.81534	312.793	-	-	-	-
CY Pound	1.9735	3.3488	1.2015	2.8362	232.502	-	-	-	-

Metal Prices									
Metal	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SEK	NOK	DKK	EUR
Gold (oz's)	348.8	348.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Silver (oz's)	4.86	4.88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Platinum (oz's)	386.75	396.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AL (3 Months)	1667	1669	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU (3 Months)	2427	2430	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zinc (3 Months)	1344	1347	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lead (3 Months)	624	627	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NI (3 Months)	7740	7760	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
USD	5.56	5.56	5.56	6.00	6.00	-	-	-	-
GBP	6.25	6.40	6.56	6.56	6.56	-	-	-	-
JPY	0.31	0.40	0.47	0.50	0.58	-	-	-	-
DEM	3.03	3.05	3.12	3.19	3.23	-	-	-	-
FRF	3.20	3.29	3.30	3.36	3.39	-	-	-	-
CHF	1.44	1.56	1.63	1.75	1.75	-	-	-	-
ITL	6.85	6.70	6.85	6.85	6.85	-	-	-	-

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Lighting fixture
- Hang loose
- John or Samuel
- Exchange premium
- Logical starter?
- Des's daughter
- Scottish skirt
- Travel permit
- Caesar said it first?
- Moose
- He has court appeal?
- Note
- Deficient
- Baba
- Restrict
- Tucker's partner
- Cleric's residence
- Press
- Rational
- Penetrate
- Tank
- Line dance
- Jacket or collar
- Reject
- Ancient
- Relatives
- Amendment
- Grande or Bravo
- Facilitate
- Irritating critic
- Calendar?
- Pub drink
- Scent
- Kiln
- Racetrack
- Author Gore
- Chianti, for example
- Cavort
- Anthony and Barbara
- At a distance
- Literary collections

DOWN

- LA. hoopster
- Nimble
- Swiss dairy?
- Kitchen item
- Discolored
- Norse deity
- majesty
- Idle
- Dismount
- Luxembourg, for example
- "— may look on a king"
- Jester
- Oracle
- Certain chicken: var.
- "The doctor —"
- Actor Merlin
- Resided
- Furious
- Engine
- Shakespearean music group?
- "Bus Stop" playwright
- Coffee or cocoa
- Submissive
- One opposed
- Dependable
- Reef maker
- Pitcher Blue
- Saudi specie
- Huckster
- Croc's cousin
- Andes animal
- Sharp barks
- Owls
- Parched
- Protuberance
- Superstar
- Innocent
- Annapolis inst.
- "a man — mouse?"

by Sefton Boyars

PRIM ANNAS ECCE
VETO PRONE GOUT
TESS PASTA GURU
FALSE KIT SLID
FETA ICED DOE
PARMESAN DARN
LIE PEROT METRO
ODER DEFER SCAT
PECAN AFTER ANT
OMIT METEORIC
EMU LUCY RARE
LANE LHM ORALE
ARTY ALOOF DEAL
TIRE NISEI ESSE
HAYS EVERT ASTA

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MAY 15, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Family matters need your attention today, so proceed with a cautious attitude. Have guests in later this evening who can do something nice for you and loved ones and make them feel very welcome. TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a good day today to see persons who are close to your home and deal with neighbourhood business more. Later this evening will be good to gain the assistance of knowledgeable people for your career activities. GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Monetary affairs are vital today, so discuss your options with your loved ones and gain their advice. Your good judgement can easily increase your abundance which will make your mate quite appreciative. MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You are highly magnetic at this time and you can acquire almost anything you want if you are willing to put in enough effort. Later this evening you can get together. LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Show your devotion today to the one you love quietly and you can get excellent rewards. Show your will power, also to handle any adverse condition which comes in your direction which will make you successful. VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You can get ahead faster today via the good auspices of persons you know who are sentimental. Show your appreciation to a bigwig for the assistance on any career activities and you can gain prosperity. LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day today to be out in public and make a fine impression on others who come in your direction. Show some talent to a prominent person and you can be quite successful from him or she noticing your abilities. SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) New obtainable opportunities are coming your way today, so seize as many of them as you can. Later this evening will be good for you to meet with fellow associates and make a plan of action to completed new projects. SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your love for your mate is best expressed in tangible ways today, so do something special for he or she and this will be well received. Meet your responsibilities concerning your career activities later this evening and be successful. CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Those you want to deal with are highly emotional today, so keep out their way if there are any difficulties. Wear a big smile later this evening and the world is your oyster, so make the best of every opportunity. AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is an ideal day today to add colour and charm to your surrounding, which will make those in your residence very happy. Have a heart-to-heart talk with a fellow associate and try to resolve any difficulties which are present. PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You can have much luck today connected with any amusement plans you have made. This could make you more popular also in the eyes of those in authority, so make every effort to gain recognition from him or her.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

A review of news from the Arabic press

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Bulls advance, Sonics stave off elimination against Rockets

CHICAGO (R) — The defending NBA champion Chicago Bulls finished off the Atlanta Hawks four games to one Tuesday, while the Seattle SuperSonics lived to fight again after staving off elimination at the hands of the Houston Rockets.

The Bulls, sparked by an emotional performance by bad boy Dennis Rodman on his 36th birthday, rolled into the Eastern Conference finals with a 107-92 victory over Atlanta.

The Rockets missed a chance to join Chicago and Utah in the NBA's version of the final four by falling to Seattle at home, 100-94.

Rodman snapped out of a playoff funk with 12 points and nine rebounds, helping hold off a Hawks rally in the final period before being ejected yet again.

"Dennis gave us so much energy. He was amazing," said Chicago sharp-shooter Steve Kerr, who scored 15 points coming off the bench, including 3-for-4 from three-point range.

Rodman avoided major controversy until late in the fourth quarter, when he tangled with Atlanta Centre Dikembe Mutombo and was ejected for the third time in eight playoff games.

By that time, however, the game in the books and Rodman peeled off his jersey and tossed it into the crowd to a standing ovation.

"Dennis brings a lot of energy to the game and sometimes it's uncontrollable," said Chicago superstar Michael Jordan, who had a game-high 24 points despite not scoring in the fourth quarter.

"This is the best we have played in the playoffs," Scottie Pippen added 15 for the bulls, who are in the Eastern Conference finals for the seventh time in the last nine years.

Chicago awaits the winner of the New York-Miami series. New York leads 3-1 and can close it out with a win in Miami Wednesday.

Christian Laettner scored 23 points, Mookie Blaylock added 20 and Tyrone Corbin chipped in 19 for Atlanta.

"We made three runs at them but their bench killed



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan shoots a layup in front of Atlanta Hawks' Christian Laettner (R) in the first quarter of NBA Eastern Conference semifinal game in Chicago. The Bulls won 107-92 to advance to the conference finals (Reuters photo).

us," said Blaylock.

Chicago's bench outscored Atlanta's substitutes 49-6, although the Hawks used just two players outside their five starters while the Bulls got 10 players involved.

Chicago blew open a close game with a 12-2 burst late in the second quarter to take a 60-44 halftime lead.

Atlanta made a fourth-quarter push, closing to 84-77 on a three-pointer by Steve Smith with 9:33 remaining, but the Bulls scored the next seven points for a 91-77 lead.

The Hawks again got as close as nine points, but Chicago went on a 10-4 run over the final 3:49.

In Houston, Hersey

in five games, await the series winner.

Gary Payton had 21 points and 11 assists and Shawn Kemp added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Sonics, despite sitting out much of the third quarter and part of the fourth with foul trouble.

"We knew what we had to do," said Hawkins, who kept the Sonics on top with three clutch shots in the final period.

"Thank God the shots went in. Now we got to take this thing back to Seattle and win game six."

Hakeem Olajuwon scored a game-high 31 points and pulled down 16 rebounds for Houston, Charles Barkley contributed 17 points and 20 boards and Clyde Drexler added 26 points.

But the Rockets were just 5-of-27 from three-point range as Matt Maloney — the game four hero with eight treys and 26 points — went 0-for-6 from behind the arc, scoring just two points.

Barkley was also 0-of-4 and Mario Elie 0-of-5 from three-point range.

Seattle came out determined from the opening tip-off, building a quick 15-5 advantage and a 27-19 lead after one quarter.

Houston fought back to 29-29 before Seattle opened a 57-52 halftime lead.

An 8-2 surge by the rockets closed the third quarter and cut the deficit to 79-71.

But Hawkins opened the fourth with a three-pointer and Payton and Sam Perkins added free throws for a 13-point lead with 10:10 left.

Drexler pulled Houston within 84-76, but Hawkins responded with a three-pointer with 8:32 remaining.

A Hawkins layup pushed Seattle's lead to 91-80 with 6:52 left and Houston got no closer than the final margin the rest of the way.

"Those guys came in here ready for a war," said Houston coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "We talked about closing them out and said all the right things but we didn't put on the fatigues."

Western Conference semifinals
Seattle 100 Houston 94
(Houston leads best-of-seven series 3-2)

Eastern Conference semifinals
Chicago 107 Atlanta 92
(Chicago wins best-of-seven series 4-1)

Jordan attends AIPS World Congress

THE 60th World Congress of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) got underway in Oviedo, Spain with a series of issues on its four-day agenda including electing the new executive board for the years 1997-2000.

Representing Jordan at the meeting are Mun'eh Fakhoury and Mohammad Sa'd Al Shanti of the Jordan Sports and Youth Information Federation's executive board.

Graf struggles in comeback match

BERLIN (R) — Steffi Graf, playing her first match after three months out with a knee injury, struggled to a three sets win over American Chanda Rubin at the German Open Tuesday.

Graf, who lost her World No. 1 ranking to Swiss Martina Hingis in March, triumphed 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Top-seeded Graf appeared visibly stunned at losing the second set as Rubin, unseeded and ranked 27th in the world, broke service in the eighth game and then held her own to square the match.

"I felt very uncertain out there at first," Graf said. "I gave away a lot of easy points. I wasn't in the shape that I would like to be. I am not very happy with my performance, but happy that I made it through my first match."

It was Graf's sixth win over Rubin in six meetings. She had received a bye into the second round and will face 15th seed Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania next.

Rubin, who climbed as high as sixth in the world rankings in 1996 before injuring her right hand, beat Canada's Patricia Hy-Boulais 7-5, 6-2 in the first round.

Sampras and Chang go out in first round of Italian Open

ROME (AP) — The clay courts of Europe continue to bring out the worst in America's top players.

Pete Sampras and Michael Chang, ranked No. 1 and 2 in the world, lost in straight sets Tuesday at the Italian Open — the first time in the tournament's history that the top two seeds went out in the first round.

Sampras, who has always struggled on clay, was jeered in his error-filled 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 loss to fellow American Jim Courier — his second consecutive clay-court defeat this season.

Chang, who also prefers hard courts to clay, was ousted by 54th-ranked Hernan Gumeny of Argentina 6-3, 6-2 for his second straight first-round loss on the slow surface.

Escaping the upset trend were fourth-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov, No. 11 Boris Becker and No. 14 Tim Henman. But two top clay courters, No. 13 Felix Mantilla and Andrei Medvedev, were eliminated.

Sampras, who won the Italian Open in 1994 but lost in the first round in his last appearance in 1995, drew whistles of derision from the crowd as he committed a slew of unforced errors to fall behind 5-1 in the second set.

"It makes it more difficult to play when they're hissing like that," said Sampras, who had 36 unforced mistakes for the match. "Maybe it looks like I'm not trying when I'm not playing well. When you're not playing well, they're going to get on you. It's not all that fun."

Sampras finally picked up his game — cutting down on errors and hitting more freely on his groundstrokes — and won three straight games to close to 5-4. But it was too late, and Courier served out the match to beat Sampras for the first time in their last eight meetings.

Courier said he was determined to withstand the late rally, recalling that Sampras had rallied from two sets down to beat him in five at the Australian Open in 1995.



American Jim Courier returns a forehand shot to World No. 1 and top-seed fellow American Pete Sampras in their first round Italian Open match. Courier defeated Sampras 7-6, 6-4 (Reuters photo).

and last year's French Open.

"In the past, I've beaten myself rather than him beating me," Courier said. "Today he was going to have to beat me. He wasn't going to get any help from me."

Not long ago, a Sampras-Courier match would have been a final. But Courier, a former two-time Italian and French Open champion, has dropped to No. 24 in the rankings and was unseeded this year.

"With Pete, I'd rather play him in the first round than later," Courier said. "He gets more dangerous in the later rounds."

Sampras said, "this was the toughest draw either of us could have faced. Hopefully, it won't happen again at the French Open."

The French Open, the only Grand Slam tournament Sampras hasn't won, starts in two weeks. Sampras, who also lost his first match at the Monte Carlo Open last month, will play in next week's World Team Cup in Dusseldorf, Germany, to prepare for Paris.

Last year, Sampras had virtually no clay-court preparation but reached the semifinals of the French.

"Being 0-2 on clay this year doesn't help," he said. "But it doesn't worry me considering what happened last year. I'm not going to go in there and think I can't win there. I think I can."

Gumeny, who upset

Courier in the second round here last year, pulled another surprise by eliminating Chang with ease.

Chang has won four tournaments this year, including a clay-court event in Orlando. But he lost in the first round on clay in Atlanta and looked ill at ease on Rome's red clay.

Chang said he had trouble adjusting to the European clay after playing on hard courts in the United States and Asia.

"I don't feel like I've made that transition yet," he said. "It is always frustrating when you realize it's not going to kick in right away."

In other matches, Becker — playing only his ninth match of the year while recovering from a wrist injury — saved a set point at 6-5 in the first set and powered to a 7-6 (7-3), 6-2 win over Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi.

Kafelnikov, the French Open champion still looking to regain his top form after a three-month layoff with a broken finger, edged Spain's Javier Sanchez 7-5, 7-6 (7-5).

Pat Rafter surprised Spain's Mantilla 6-1, 3-6, 6-4, and fellow Australian Scott Draper knocked out Medvedev — winner of last week's German Open — 7-5, 6-3.

Henman saved three match points in the second set against Roberto Carrero, who then retired with a leg injury trailing 0-2 in the third.

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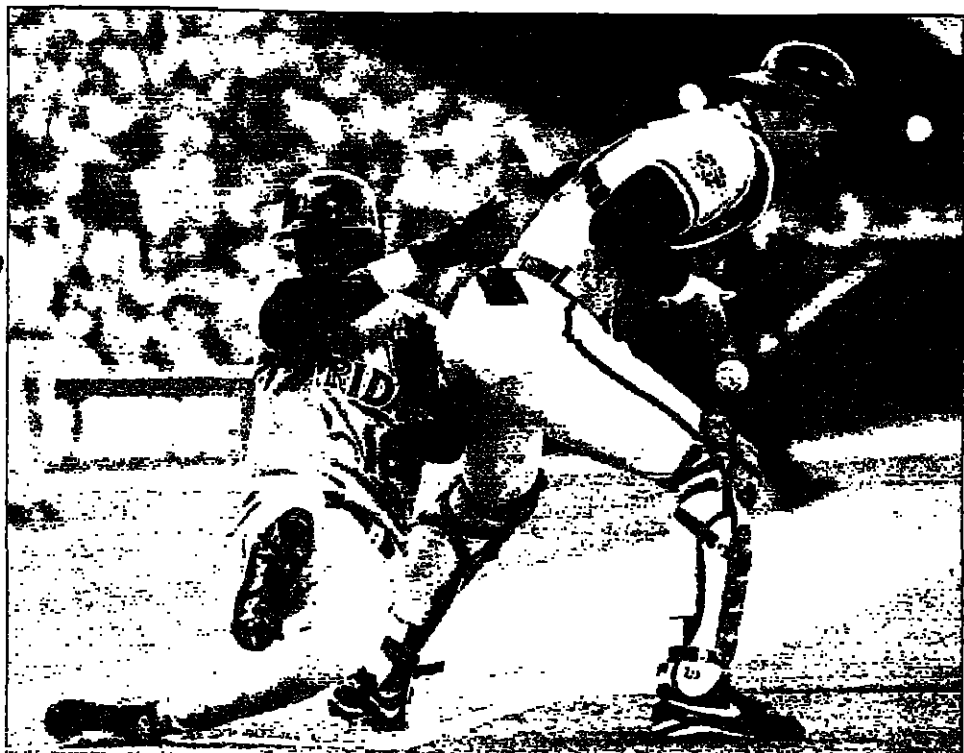
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Florida Marlins catcher Edgar Renteria slides safely into home as the Atlanta Braves catcher Javier Lopez bobbles the throw from the outfield in the first inning at Turner Field in Atlanta. Renteria scored on a sacrifice fly by John Cangelosi. The Marlins won 11-5 (Reuters photo)

Kent grand slam powers Giants past Reds

CINCINNATI (R) — Intentionally walking Giants slugger Barry Bonds must have seemed like a good idea at the time.

With Darryl Hamilton and Bill Mueller on second and third in the third inning, the Reds elected to walk Barry Bonds, preferring to take their chances with Jeff Kent.

Kent smashed a 3-2 pitch from Reds starter Dave Burba (3-4) over the left-field fence for his eighth homer of the season and fourth career grand slam, providing the Giants with all of their runs in a 4-1 victory over the Cincinnati Reds Tuesday.

"I hit a fastball high and away, I was looking for a fastball," said Kent, who defended Cincinnati's decision to load the bases by walking Bonds.

"It's a no-brainer, he's the best hitter in the game so if there's a base open they're going to put him on," added Kent, who struck out in his other three at-bats but leads the Giants with 34 RBI.

"They'll be careful with Barry until the day he dies, even in old-timers games," Giants manager Dusty Baker predicted.

Shawn Estes allowed one run over 7 1/3 innings as San Francisco posted its third consecutive win.

Estes (5-2) gave up five hits with four walks and six strikeouts, holding the Reds scoreless through seven innings.

The Reds scored their lone run in the eighth.

In Atlanta, Bobby Bonilla's grand slam highlighted a seven-run fourth as the Florida Marlins beat the Braves 11-5.

The Marlins extended a 3-2 lead in the fourth as Paul Byrd came on for Braves starter Terrell Wade (1-3)

and intentionally walked Gary Sheffield to load the bases.

Moises Alou drew a walk to force home a run and Bonilla launched his first homer of the season and sixth career grand slam for an 8-2 advantage. Jeff Conine followed with a single and Charles Johnson belted his third homer to cap the scoring.

Tony Saunders (2-1) allowed three runs and five hits in seven innings with one walk with six strikeouts.

In Chicago, Sammy Sosa hit a two-out, two-run homer off Pedro Astacio in the bottom of the eighth inning and three pitchers combined on a seven-hitter as the Cubs rallied for a 2-1 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Turk Wendell (1-2) worked a perfect eighth for the win and Mel Rojas got himself into and out of a bases-loaded jam in the ninth for Chicago.

Todd Zeile hit a solo homer in the seventh for the Dodgers. Astacio (3-1) carried a five-hitter into the eighth, but issued a two-out walk to Mark Grace before Sosa lined a 2-0 pitch over the centre-field fence for his sixth homer.

In Montreal, Pedro Martinez pitched his second complete game of the season to raise his record to a perfect 6-0 as the Expos beat the San Diego Padres 7-3.

Martinez gave up 11 singles and three runs — two earned — while striking out seven, marking the first time this year he has allowed more than one earned run.

In 45 1/3 innings, he has allowed only four earned runs for a league-leading era of 0.79.

Montreal got all the runs it needed with a four-run outburst in the first inning off starter Fernando Valenzuela (1-5) capped by Henry Rodriguez's three-run homer.

In Philadelphia, Scott Rolen tripled two runs to tie the game and scored the go-ahead run in the bottom of the eighth inning as the Phillies rallied for a 3-2 win over the St. Louis Cardinals.

Lance Painter walked Gregg Jefferies and Mickey Morandini before T.J. Mathews (1-2) came on and allowed Rolen's triple for a 2-2 tie. Rolen scored the winning run on Ruben Amaro's weak groundout to left of the mound off Tony Fossas (3-3).

Jerry Spradlin (1-1) notched the win by pitching a scoreless eighth.

Tom Lampkin and Delino Deshields homered from St. Louis.

In New York, Greg McMichael escaped a bases-loaded jam in the top of the seventh and Butch Huskey snapped a tie with a homer in the bottom of the frame as the Mets posted their fourth straight win, defeating the Houston Astros 4-3.

McMichael (3-2) got Jeff Bagwell on a line drive to centre field to end the Astros' seventh, leaving the bases loaded and preserving a 3-3 tie.

With one out in the bottom of the inning, Huskey drilled a 1-1 pitch from Russ Springer (1-1) into the left-field bullpen for his seventh homer and a 4-3 advantage.

15th Jordan Rally starts today with top local competitors missing event

Bin Sulayyem aims for record 7th title

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The 15th Jordan International Rally starts Thursday with top foreign competitors again favoured to clinch the title especially in the absence of the Kingdom's best drivers.

The two-day event forms the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship which started in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and includes rallies in Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar and Dubai.

Reigning eight-time Middle East champion Mohammad Bin Sulayyem of the UAE is back hoping to win his record seventh Jordan Rally title in his powerful Ford Escort Cosworth.

Last year's runner-up and 1995 Middle East and Jordan Rally titleholder Abdullah Bakhshab of Saudi Arabia is back in his Toyota Celica GT4.

Sulayyem won the inaugural 1997 Middle East event in the UAE followed by Bakhshab and both drivers look to the Jordan as an important event to secure their grip atop the regional championship.

A host of the Kingdom's top drivers are missing the event this year including HRH Prince Abdullah Bin Al Hussein.

Jordan Drivers Open champion Ahmad Daoud will miss the rally after

JORDAN RALLY RECORD

Year	Entrants	Starters	Finishers
1981	36	34	13
1982	29	27	17
1983	30	25	6
1984	31	29	12
1985	38	35	15
1986	50	40	15
1987	48	38	19
1988	36	32	10
1990	40	32	15
1992	41	38	15
1993	39	36	13
1994	46	38	22
1995	36	26	15
1996	32	27	12

Year	Entrants	Starters	Finishers
1981	36	34	13
1982	29	27	17
1983	30	25	6
1984	31	29	12
1985	38	35	15
1986	50	40	15
1987	48	38	19
1988	36	32	10
1990	40	32	15
1992	41	38	15
1993	39	36	13
1994	46	38	22
1995	36	26	15
1996	32	27	12

fracturing his leg and Bashar Bustani, who was heavily favoured after getting a Group A car, will be sitting out the rally after the late arrival of his car.

The Kingdom's top competitor in the past two international rallies, Ma'rouf Abu Samra, who was fourth last year and third in 1994, will also be absent after recently moving abroad.

Adding to their woes,

organisers the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ), also lack a major sponsor for the event for the fourth year in its 15-year history.

A positive new aspect however will be the adding of the scenic route of the first day asphalt stages in Madaba, Iraq Al Ameer and then onto the lowest point on Earth — the Dead Sea.

After considerable prob-

lems of asphalt stages near Jarash in 1993 and 1994, the stages in the last two years were run over all desert tracks mainly in the south of the country.

This year's rally covers a total distance of over 800 kilometres including 320 kilometres of 19 special stages.

With HRH Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein giving the start signal from King Abdullah Gardens in

Amman at 11:45 a.m. Thursday, this first day will include 11 special stages taking drivers to Rumman Forest, Iraq Al Amir, Dead Sea, Mousa Springs, Mount Nebo, and Mahes.

The first car is expected back at rally headquarters — the Forte Grand — at about 7 p.m.

The second day begins at 7 a.m. Friday with 8 desert special stages to the south of the country passing through Tunaib, Daba'a, Swagga, Hafira, and Hasa.

The first car is due back the hotel at 5 p.m.

Competitors represent the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, Kuwait, Australia, Israel, Oman, Germany, Great Britain, the Czech Republic.

The UAE's Bin Sulayyem, aiming for a record ninth Middle East title has been boosted by a major sponsorship agreement with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Emirates.

"Mohammad Bin Sulayyem is the sporting ambassador for the UAE and the whole of the Arab World, and we are happy to be supporting him in the Middle East Rally Championship," and ADNOC spokesman said prior to the start of the gruelling two-day event.

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Surhoff leads Orioles past Oakland

OAKLAND (R) — B.J. Surhoff's red hot bat carried the Baltimore Orioles to a 7-3 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Tuesday.

Surhoff continued his torrid hitting with a single, double, homer and four RBI. He is 7-for-13 with 11 RBI in his last three games, raising his batting average to .352, and has driven in 23 runs in his last 17 games.

Baltimore has won its last five road games and equalled the best 36-game start in club history at 25-11. The 1970 Orioles also opened 25-11 and went on to win the World Series.

Brent Mayne hit a two-run homer for the Athletics, who suffered their seventh consecutive defeat.

Surhoff had a two-run double off starter Mike Mohler (0-3) for a 5-2 lead in the third and cracked a two-run homer off Steve Montgomery in the fifth to build a five-run cushion.

At Minnesota, David Cone allowed two runs over seven innings and Tino Martinez and Bernie Williams homered as the surging New York Yankees beat the twins 11-2 for their sixth win in seven games.

The sizzling Martinez put himself in some fairly legendary company, becoming just the third Yankee to record 15 homers in his first 40 games, joining Babe Ruth and Mickey Mantle.

New York broke open a 3-2 game with seven runs in the sixth, sparked by an RBI single by Paul O'Neill and Joe Girardi's two-run double.

In Detroit, Felipe Lira scattered four hits for his third career shutout and Bob Hamelin hit a pair of solo homers as the Tigers blanked the Toronto Blue Jays 4-0.

Lira (2-2) walked one and struck out a career-high 10. Juan Guzman (3-3) faced just two batters and threw 12 pitches before leaving with stiffness in his right shoulder. He gave up a hit and walk and both runners scored.

Hamelin extended the lead to 3-0 in the second when he

slugged a 2-2 pitch over the right-field fence. He added his second homer in the seventh to complete the scoring.

In Milwaukee, Jay Buhner singled in a pair of runs with one out in the top of the ninth inning and Randy Johnson rebounded from his first loss in 17 decisions as the Seattle Mariners rallied for a 2-1 win over the brewers.

After Edgar Martinez was walked intentionally to load the bases, Buhner lined a two-run single to left field to put the Mariners on top, 2-1.

Mike Fetters (1-1), who walked the first two batters he faced in the ninth on just eight pitches, took the loss. Johnson (5-1), who had his 16-game winning streak halted in his last start, gave up six hits in eight innings.

In Kansas City, Tim Lincecum pitched a two-hitter for his fourth straight win and Bip Roberts and Mike Sweeney drove in two runs each to lead the Royals to a 9-0 rout of the Boston Red Sox.

At Texas, Matt Williams snapped a tie with a solo homer in the sixth inning and added an RBI double in the ninth as the Cleveland Indians rallied from a three-run deficit for a 7-3 victory over the Rangers.

Juan Gonzalez's two-run homer in the third inning off starter Chad Ogea (3-3) gave Texas a 3-0 lead. But Cleveland answered with three runs in the fourth off loser Darren Oliver (1-4) on a two-run double by Dave Justice and an RBI single by sandy Alomar.

Williams broke the deadlock with his 10th homer and the Indians padded their lead with three runs in the ninth.

In Anaheim, Gary Disarcina tied a club record with three doubles and drove in two runs as the Angels scored seven runs in the third inning and held on for an 8-7 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Mark Langston (2-2), who missed his last two starts with a sore elbow, allowed three runs and six hits over six innings for the win. James Baldwin (1-5) was tagged for eight runs and 13 hits over 6 2/3 innings for the White Sox.

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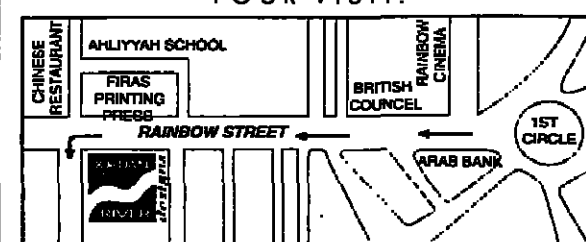
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Kinshasa waits in sombre mood as its fate is decided

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire's teeming capital awaited its fate on Wednesday in a sullen mood darkened by the imposition of a military curfew and a stay-at-home protest organised by opponents of President Mobutu Sese Seko.

A long black Cadillac with smoked-glass windows whisked the ailing leader out to Kinshasa airport in a motorcade led by outriders with lights flashing and sirens wailing.

Jeeploads of heavily armed soldiers escorted the convoy of some 40 vehicles and two armoured anti-aircraft carriers protected the rear.

Thousands of onlookers silently lined the highway through the littered and run-down slums on the outside of the city of five million to watch him go by and sentries were posted every 50 metres close to the airport itself.

Foreign reporters were not permitted to watch Mr. Mobutu fly off to his second, and possibly final, meeting with rebel leader Laurent Kabila to decide whether some compromise could avert a bloody showdown in the capital.

Kinshasa was placed under a dusk-till-dawn military curfew on Tuesday. On Wednesday, most shops and businesses were closed following a stay-at-home call issued by Mr. Mobutu's



An armed soldier guards an empty road on Wednesday while a woman carrying a child's coffin for her sister who died yesterday, walks by. Kinshasa residents stayed home from work today as part of a "dead city" action called by the AFDL rebels (Reuters photo)

political opponents.

Streets in the centre of town were close to empty and there was little traffic. Most petrol stations and the main market places were closed.

"The success of today's operation has clearly shown that the people don't want Mobutu any more, and people know exactly what to do when the rebels come," said Laurent Mbayo, an adviser to Mr. Mobutu's veteran political opponent Etienne Tshisekedi.

But in the outlying suburbs, crowds of men,

women and children swarmed around makeshift food stalls, concentrating on picking up enough supplies to get through another day before curfew.

Boys took advantage of the traffic holiday to play football in the potholed streets.

Rebel radio claimed Kabila forces were only a few dozen kilometres from Kinshasa, but state television said they were still being held back by government troops at Kenge, some 200 kilometres to the east.

There were very few

troops or police patrols visible on the streets of the capital, but plainclothes secret police roamed the city in unmarked cars, making it advisable for foreigners to stay off the streets.

In Brazzaville, across the wide Zaire river, adorned with a steady stream of floating hyacinth and drifting vegetation, troops from five western armies waited with helicopters and fast boats to pluck foreign nationals to safety in case the capital, where normal rules no longer apply, should plunge into chaos.

Peres hit by humiliating defeat in his own party

TEL AVIV (AP) — The illustrious career of former premier and peace architect Shimon Peres appeared to come to a sad end Tuesday when his Labour party rejected a motion to consider creating a new honorary position for him.

By a vote of 1,403 to 856, Labour's convention rejected the idea of making Mr. Peres party "president" three weeks before his rank-and-file are to pick a successor for him as party chairman and candidate for prime minister.

"Forgive me for not getting old according to plan," Mr. Peres said before the secret ballot, in a bitter and often emotional speech attacking younger colleagues who wished to move him aside.

"Maybe there's somebody here who can speed it up," At one point, Mr. Peres, who in 20 years lost four elections and tied one, asked rhetorically whether he is a loser, and was greeted with loud shouts of "yes, yes."

The result was considered a victory for former military chief Ehud Barak, who is heavily favoured in the primary election for the Labour leadership scheduled for June 3 and seen as the party's best chance to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

After the vote, the gloomy Mr. Peres said he never really wanted the job and insisted he "won't give up responsibility for the peace

process... nobody can take that from me."

Mr. Peres, the last active politician among Israel's founding fathers, played a key role in building Israel's defences and winning the Jewish state acceptance around the world and among its Arab neighbours. He is seen as the architect of the past years' peace accords with the Palestinians, first as foreign minister and after the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister.

After he nevertheless lost elections a year ago to Mr. Netanyahu, many expected him to vacate the political stage. And indeed, last fall he grudgingly said he would not run for premier in the next election, scheduled for 2000.

But he has since strived to persuade Mr. Netanyahu to bring Labour into his government to "save" the peace process—a move critics saw as a scheme to somehow prolong his career.

The "unity government" option appears to have been killed off by influence peddling scandal that tainted Mr. Netanyahu and eroded support within Labour for joining him.

With the party leadership election approaching, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's dwindling supporters hatched the plan to create the new party president position for him.

Had the proposal to discuss the idea been adopted

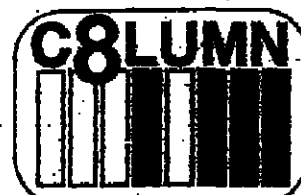
Tuesday, the congress would have considered what kind of position that would be.

Mr. Barak wanted to keep it purely ceremonial, fearing that Mr. Peres would otherwise use the position to challenge the new leadership and ultimately weaken the party. "We need to make clear that our main problem is to be victorious over Mr. Netanyahu and for that we need a party that will prepare as a group... and not a few different decision-making centres," Mr. Barak said.

But Mr. Peres said he would not consider a role bereft of all authority. "I am not interested in being a figurehead president," he told reporters. "What am I, crazy?" Mr. Peres' bid for the presidency was supported by several party doves who felt it was a way of keeping in check the more hawkish Mr. Barak, including Mr. Barak's main challenger in the Labour primary — peace maven and Peres protégé Yossi Beilin.

"There is a group around Mr. Peres that has a clear interest in creating anarchy in the party. It is impossible to have two party leaders," said ex-Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, a Mr. Barak ally.

The Peres-Barak confrontation revived memories of the bitter rivalry between Mr. Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, resolved only in the few years before Mr. Rabin's assassination.



McCartney tries cartoons, symphonies, painting

LONDON (R) — Paul McCartney says he is making a cartoon, writing a symphony and trying his hand at painting. The Beatle, who became one of the 20th century's most famous composers and celebrates his 55th birthday next month, marked the release of his first solo album for four years by appearing in a documentary. The documentary showed him with the sweeping impressionist canvases he has done in his new role as an artist. He has also tried doing most voices and singing all the songs for "Tropic Island Hum," cartoon follow-up to "Rupert and the Frog Song." He has also turned his hand to a symphonic poem.

'Zyklon B' licence plate recalled in Virginia

RICHMOND (R) — The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) said a specialised license plate bearing the name of a gas used at German death camps during World War II could no longer be used by a state resident. "We sent out a letter to the individual and advised him that the plate was being recalled," Jeanne Chenault, spokeswoman for the Virginia DMV said. Ryan Maziarz, 21, the Hampton, Virginia man with the plate reading "Zyklon B," told the Virginian-Pilot newspaper he was aware of the linking of the gas to the Holocaust — which he said had not occurred.

Treasure hunters in court over sea bed damage

KEY WEST (R) — Two Florida treasure hunters who discovered riches in a sunken Spanish galleon appeared in court to face a government lawsuit that could force them to turn over the booty and pay \$600,000 in environmental damages. Five years ago a salvage company run by Mel Fisher and his son Kane discovered the San Fernando galleon, which sank off the Florida Keys in 1733. They recovered some 200 artifacts, including an iron cannon, silver coins and gold bullion. Government lawyers said the three-month expedition left 597 craters, some as deep as three metres, and killed over 6,470 square metres of sea grass.

Colonial symbols disappear from Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — With the July 1 handover to China nearing, Hong Kong is purging British symbols, icons and insignia but there are few plans to scrap colonial place names. One exception is Victoria Park, named after the queen reigning when a naval patrol planted the British flag on Hong Kong island in 1841. It will be renamed Hong Kong Central Park. Work began last week on removing the royal insignia from Hong Kong's 800 post boxes. The royal mail, to be renamed Hong Kong post, is repainting its red post vans and boxes a viridian green — similar in hue to China's. Stamps and new coins no longer show the queen's head. The Hong Kong Jockey Club has dropped its royal prefix and the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club has begun the search for a new mainland patron to replace the queen. From July 1, China's five-starred flag will flutter in place of the red white and blue British flag.

Russia, NATO agree on alliance's expansion plan

MOSCOW (AP) — After all-night talks, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Secretary General Javier Solana and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov announced agreement Wednesday on a vital charter linking Russia with the Western military alliance.

The pact, if approved by NATO governments and the Kremlin, would govern relations between the two former cold war and remove the last apparent obstacle to NATO's expansion into eastern Europe.

No details of the agreement were released immediately. But both officials praised the results of their talks, which began Tuesday evening and lasted well into Wednesday.

"It is a great victory of wisdom, a victory for the international community, a victory for Russia and other countries that want peace," Mr. Primakov said.

Mr. Solana called Mr. Primakov a tough and intelligent negotiator and said they had

finally "hammered out an accord that is suitable for all parties."

The breakthrough came after Mr. Solana conferred Wednesday by telephone with President Boris Yeltsin.

Russia bitterly opposes the alliance's plans to offer membership to former Soviet satellites, but cannot block the expansion. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are expected to be invited to join the alliance this summer.

In an effort to ease Russian concerns, the two sides have been trying for months to reach the security agreement announced Tuesday.

Russia wants the document to be ready for signing at a Russia-NATO summit in Paris on May 27.

Among the biggest sticking points during negotiations, Russia cited NATO's refusal to guarantee that it will not put nuclear weapons on the territories of new members. The

alliance says it has no plans to do so, but won't rule out such a move in the future.

Moscow and NATO also differed about possible limits on the number of combat troops that NATO can move to territories of new members. The sides agreed that the alliance will not station "significant" numbers of troops in new members states, but they disagreed until the end on what qualifies as "significant."

NATO also had declined to promise that it won't build military bases on the territory of new members, including airfields, communications and air defence installations.

However, negotiators have agreed to create a new Russia-NATO council that will allow Moscow to have a direct voice — but not a vote — in decisions made by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The leaders of all 16 NATO members must approve the agreement before the signing.

Israel's high court hears demands to go after 'Bibi'

TEL AVIV (AP) — The supreme court heard petitions Wednesday to prosecute Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and two of his political allies for fraud in an influence-peddling scandal.

Israel's high court is notoriously activist and independent, and a ruling to force charges against the prime minister would likely bring down the government, though technically he could remain in office until convicted.

"I expect a positive response from the high court," said Ofir Pines, a legislator from the opposition Labour Party who filed one of the nine motions. "The judges should be gutsy."

However, the five-judge panel was believed unlikely to interfere in this case. By midday Wednesday, the court had rejected several petitions asking an official commission of inquiry into the scandal be set up. The judges also rejected a petition asking for the publication of a police report that recommended Mr. Netanyahu's indictment, and

another requesting publication of minority opinion by three prosecutors who also recommended the prime minister be indicted.

The court was not expected to rule Wednesday on the main question of whether to indict Mr. Netanyahu.

Security was tight Wednesday morning, with dozens of police, including paramilitary border police, deployed outside the courthouse.

On Tuesday night, hundreds of followers of Aryeh Deri — leader of the religious Shas Party and the only politician facing indictment in the scandal — demonstrated outside the court building and briefly burst into the entrance hall.

Israel Radio said guards had to smuggle justices out through a side door. Police dispersed the protest without arrests, said police spokeswoman Linda Menuhin.

Police last month recommended that four people be indicted in the scandal — Mr. Netanyahu,

Justice Minister Tsahi Hanegbi, senior aide Avigdor Lieberman and Mr. Deri.

However, state prosecutors decided to charge only Mr. Deri, saying they lacked proof concerning Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Hanegbi. The investigation against Mr. Lieberman continues.

The affair has sparked tensions between Israeli Jews of European and Middle Eastern background. Supporters of Mr. Deri — religious Jews of Middle Eastern origin — believe Mr. Deri is being treated unfairly by the establishment, made up mostly of Ashkenazi Jews of European descent.

The scandal surrounded the appointment of a political crony of Mr. Netanyahu's as attorney-general in January. The man, a little known Jerusalem lawyer named Roni Bar-On, resigned after only a day on the job amid a furor about his suitability.

Two largest political parties contemplate possibility of 'government coalition' if they win majority of parliament seats; IAF and NCP play down differences

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) and the National Constitutional Party (NCP) expect to win a cumulative majority of the Lower House seats in this autumn's parliamentary elections, party sources asserted.

In separate interviews, leaders of the two parties also hinted at the possibility of forming a coalition government, after the elections, and declared that "doors are open" on both sides.

"We anticipate that we will win 20 to 30 seats," an NCP spokesperson told the Jordan Times on Wednesday, adding that a special team is currently reviewing the party's election campaign strategy.

"We will try to push our candidates in all districts, but we await the results of a study to decide on which districts we should concentrate," the party source disclosed, adding that "the NCP Executive Committee will prepare the candidates' list according to their leadership qualities, their position in their communities, and

their personal charisma."

Last week, IAF Secretary General Ishaq Farhan told the Jordan Times he expected his party to improve the results obtained in the 1993 elections, when it won 17 seats in the 80-member Lower House of Parliament.

Arabic press reports quoted Dr. Farhan on Tuesday as announcing that the IAF is planning to field around 40 candidates, and expects that the number of its representatives "will not be less than 16."

Amalgamating one large and eight smaller parties into one unified group, the establishment of the NCP, licensed by the minister of interior earlier this month, reshaped the configuration of Jordan's political arena, previously fragmented into 26 political parties.

If another consolidation, this time between moderate-leftist parties, materialised ahead of the elections for the Kingdom's 13th legislature, voters would have to choose between three major distinct blocs: The Islamists represented by the IAF, Jordan's strongest opposition party; the nationalists-centrists of the NCP; and a moderate-

leftist coalition presumably headed by high-profile personalities such as former Prime Ministers Ahmad Obeidat and Taher Masri as well as Secretary General of the pan-Arabist Al Mustaqbal Party Suleiman Arar.

If their leaders' forecast is correct and the IAF and the NCP win around 20 and over 20 seats respectively, the two parties would achieve a parliamentary majority which could give His Majesty King Hussein enough reasons to try a coalition government.

"The concept of a coalition government is very new in Jordan, and it is too early to talk about a coalition government in which the NCP would participate with the IAF, but we do not close doors on anyone," said NCP Deputy Secretary General for Information Affairs Hakim Kheir.

If an IAF-NCP coalition were indeed achieved, it would be the first time the Islamists join a cabinet, after the 1991 government of former Prime Minister Mudar Badran.

Earlier this year, discussions over the possibility of

a coalition government were under way between former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and some IAF personalities. But diverging stands on normalising ties with Israel and the IMF-prescribed economic adjustment reforms deadlocked the negotiations.

In an interview with the Jordan Times on Wednesday, Mr. Kheir listed the "common grounds" on which a coalition with the Islamists could be established as, mainly, opposition to normalisation of ties with Israel and increased emphasis on domestic issues, such as unemployment.

"Many points in our political programmes are similar and compatible, especially when it comes to internal issues like social development, agriculture, and education," Mr. Kheir said, analysing IAF and NCP's respective programmes.

The two parties' stands "are not far away" when it comes to regional issues either, Mr. Kheir said. "We both focus on Arab nationalism, and the need for consolidating inter-Arab cooperation in the hope of realising the dream of Arab

unity," he added.

In an interview with the weekly of the Muslim Brotherhood, IAF's Dr. Farhan was also quoted as favouring the formation of a coalition government with the NCP.

"If the NCP agrees to form a coalition government that would combat normalisation, prevent Zionist infiltration and place emphasis on issues of domestic interest, we have no objection to becoming part of such a coalition," Dr. Farhan reportedly told Al Sabeel.

The Arabic daily Al Aswaq on Tuesday quoted Senator and member of the IAF Executive Committee Abdul Latif Arabiat as welcoming the consolidation of the nine former political parties in the NCP and confirming the possibility of participating in a coalition government with the new party.

Both the IAF and the NCP seem to share the same firm opposition to normalisation of ties with Israel.

Mr. Kheir, secretary general of now-dissolved Al Watan Party, that merged into the NCP, expressed "total disappointment" with

the current state of the Arab-Israeli peace process, stalled by the hard-line policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"The Likud government of Mr. Netanyahu is using peace as a tactical move to gain time in order to evacuate Palestinians from their legitimate land, disavow water-related agreements with Jordan, and change the definition of peace from 'peace-for-land' to 'peace-for-peace'," Mr. Kheir said.

The NCP has also included in its charter an appeal to freeze all ties with the Jewish state.

Though the IAF and the NCP are equally strong in their opposition to the current Israeli Likud government and both call for freezing Arab-Israeli ties, their stands diverge vis-a-vis the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

Reflecting the views of the Hashemite leadership and endorsing its policies, Mr. Kheir said the NCP considers peace as a "strategic option for the Arab World" and affirmed his "belief" in the peace process.

"We still believe in the peace process, but the peace

we seek is not just the signing of treaties, but one based on mutual confidence and reciprocal commitment to maintain and honour the spirit and the letter of the agreements signed," he told the Jordan Times.

The IAF, on the other hand, has always opposed the Arab-Israeli peace process tout-court. In an interview with the Jordan Times last week, Dr. Farhan referred to the 1993 Oslo accords and to the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty as "submission treaties."

Furthermore, Dr. Farhan suggested the IAF hopes to capitalise on the current deadlock in the peace process to gain more votes in the forthcoming elections.

"The people were promised a bright future of economic booming and prosperity after the signing of the peace treaty and now, that the economic benefits of peace are yet to be seen and the peace process is stalled, 'we (the IAF), who have always opposed the signing of those treaties, have even more credibility before the people,'" Dr. Farhan concluded.